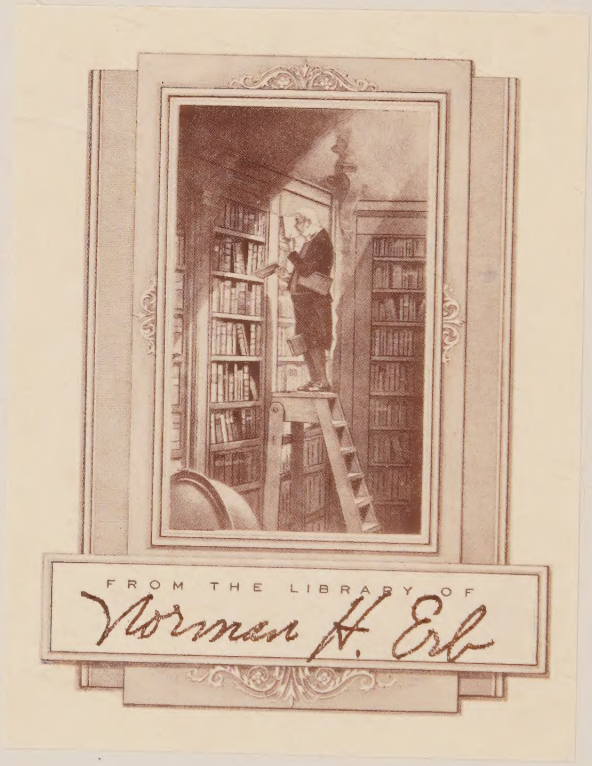

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DON CARLOS

MARY STUART

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Don Carlos

Mary Stuart

BY

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller

Translated by

R. D. Boylan and Joseph Mellish

Edited by Nathan Haskell Dole

Boston ✦ Francis A. Niccolls
& Company ✦ *Publishers*

Edition De Luxe

This Edition is Limited to One Thousand Copies, of which this is copy

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Preface

"Don Carlos" is translated by R. D. Boylan, and, in the opinion of competent judges, the version is eminently successful. Sir Theodore Martin kindly gave some assistance in passing it through the press.

The translation of "Mary Stuart" is that by the late Joseph Mellish, who appears to have been on terms of intimate friendship with Schiller;[1] and mentions, in his preface, that he was commissioned to introduce this tragedy on the English stage. His version was made from the prompter's copy, before the play was published, and, like Coleridge's "Wallenstein," contains many passages not found in the printed edition. These are distinguished by brackets. On the other hand, Mr. Mellish omitted many passages which now form part of the printed drama, all of which are now added. The translation, as a whole, stands out from similar works of the time (1800) in almost as marked a degree as Coleridge's "Wallenstein," and some passages exhibit powers of a high order; a few, however, especially in the earlier scenes, seemed capable of improvement, and these have been revised, but, in deference to the translator, with a sparing hand.

[1] Mr. Mellish was an Etonian, the schoolfellow, and, in after life, the friend and companion of Canning and Frere. With these distinguished scholars he assisted to plan and support that interesting miscellany the "Microcosm," published at Eton in 1786–87, by Mr. Charles Knight, father of the well-known publisher. Mr. Mellish, in his maturer years, held the appointment of consul-general at Hamburg, and, during that period, acquired the friendship and esteem of many of the German literati, especially Goethe, who dedicated a poem to him.

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Don Carlos and Mary Stuart.

Don Carlos

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Philip the Second, King of Spain.
Don Carlos, Prince, Son of Philip.
Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma.
Marquis de Posa.
Duke of Alva.
Count Lerma, Colonel of the Body Guard,
Duke of Feria, Knight of the Golden Fleece,
Duke of Medina Sidonia, Admiral,
Don Raimond de Taxis, Postmaster General,
} Grandees of Spain.
Domingo, Confessor to the King.
Grand Inquisitor of Spain.
Prior of a Carthusian Convent.
Page of the Queen.
Don Louis Mercado, Physician to the Queen.
Elizabeth de Valois, Queen of Spain.
Infanta Clara Farnese, a Child three years of age.
Duchess d'Olivarez, principal Attendant on the Queen.
Marchioness de Mondecar,
Princess Eboli,
Countess Fuentes,
} Ladies attendant on the Queen.
Several Ladies, Nobles, Pages, Officers of the Body Guard, and mute Characters.

Don Carlos

ACT I.

Scene I.

The Royal Gardens in Aranjuez.

Carlos *and* Domingo.

DOMINGO.

Our pleasant sojourn in Aranjuez
Is over now, and yet your Highness quits
These joyous scenes no happier than before.
Our visit hath been fruitless. O my prince,
Break this mysterious and gloomy silence!
Open your heart to your own father's heart!
A monarch never can too dearly buy
The peace of his own son — his only son.
[Carlos *looks on the ground in silence.*
Is there one dearest wish, that bounteous Heaven
Hath e'er withheld from her most favour'd child?
I stood beside, when in Toledo's walls
The lofty Charles received his vassals' homage,
When conquer'd princes throng'd to kiss his hand,
And there at once six mighty kingdoms fell
In fealty at his feet: — I stood and mark'd
The young proud blood mount to his glowing cheek,

I saw his bosom swell with high resolves,
His eye, all radiant with triumphant pride,
Flash through the assembled throng; and that same eye
Confess'd, "Now am I wholly satisfied!"
[CARLOS *turns away.*
This silent sorrow, which for eight long moons
Hath hung its shadows, prince, upon your brow,—
The myst'ry of the court, the nation's grief,—
Hath cost your father many a sleepless night,
And many a tear of anguish to your mother.

CARLOS (*turning hastily around*).

My mother!—Grant, O Heaven, I may forget
How she became my mother!

DOMINGO.

Gracious prince!

CARLOS (*passing his hand thoughtfully over his brow*).

Alas! alas! a fruitful source of woe
Have mothers been to me. My youngest act,
When first these eyes beheld the light of day,
Destroyed a mother.

DOMINGO.

Is it possible,
That this reproach disturbs your conscience, prince?

CARLOS.

And my new mother! Hath she not already
Cost me my father's heart? Scarce lov'd at best,
My claim to some small favour lay in this—
I was his only child! 'Tis over! She
Hath blest him with a daughter—and who knows
What slumbering ills the future hath in store?

DOMINGO.

You jest, my prince. All Spain adores its queen.
Shall it be thought that you, of all the world,
Alone should view her with the eyes of hate, —
Gaze on her charms, and yet be coldly wise?
How, prince? The loveliest lady of her time,
A queen withal, and once your own betrothed?
No, no, impossible — it cannot be!
Where all men love, you surely cannot hate;
Carlos could never so belie himself.
I prithee, prince, take heed she do not learn
That she hath lost her son's regard. The news
Would pain her deeply.

CARLOS.

Ay, sir! think you so?

DOMINGO.

Your Highness doubtless will remember how,
At the late tournament in Saragossa,
A lance's splinter struck our gracious sire.
The queen, attended by her ladies, sat
High in the centre gallery of the palace,
And looked upon the fight. A cry arose,
"The king! he bleeds!" Soon through the general din,
A rising murmur strikes upon her ear.
"The prince — the prince!" she cries, and forward rushed,
As though to leap down from the balcony,
When a voice answer'd, "No, the king himself!"
"Then send for his physicians!" she replied,
And straight regain'd her former self-composure.
[*After a short pause.*
But you seem wrapp'd in thought?

CARLOS.

In wonder, sir,
That the king's merry confessor should own
So rare a skill in the romancer's art. [*Austerely.*
Yet have I ever heard it said, that those
Who watch men's looks, and carry tales about,
Have done more mischief in this world of ours
Than the assassin's knife or poison'd bowl.
Your labour, sir, hath been but ill-bestow'd;
Would you win thanks, go seek them of the king.

DOMINGO.

This caution, prince, is wise. Be circumspect
With men — but not with every man alike.
Repel not friends and hypocrites together;
I mean you well, believe me!

CARLOS.

Say you so?
Let not my father mark it, then, or else
Farewell your hopes for ever of the purple.

DOMINGO (*starts*).

How!

CARLOS.

Even so! Hath he not promised you
The earliest purple in the gift of Spain?

DOMINGO.

You mock me, prince!

CARLOS.

Nay! Heaven forefend, that I
Should mock that awful man, whose fateful lips
Can doom my father or to heaven or hell!

DOMINGO.

I dare not, prince, presume to penetrate
The sacred mystery of your secret grief,
Yet I implore your Highness to remember,
That, for a conscience ill at ease, the Church
Hath opened an asylum, of which kings
Hold not the key — where even crimes are purged
Beneath the holy Sacramental seal.
You know my meaning, prince — I've said enough.

CARLOS.

No! be it never said, I tempted so
The keeper of that seal.

DOMINGO.

Prince, this mistrust —
You wrong the most devoted of your servants.

CARLOS.

Then give me up at once without a thought!
Thou art a holy man, — the world knows that, —
But, to speak plain, too zealous far for me.
The road to Peter's chair is long and rough,
And too much knowledge might encumber you.
Go, tell this to the king, who sent thee hither!

DOMINGO.

Who sent me hither?

CARLOS.

Ay! Those were my words.
Too well — too well, I know, that I'm betray'd,
Slander'd on every hand — that at this court
A hundred eyes are hired to watch my steps.
I know, that royal Philip to his slaves

Hath sold his only son, and ev'ry wretch,
Who takes account of each half-utter'd word,
Receives such princely guerdon, as was ne'er
Bestowed on deeds of honour. Oh, I know —
But hush! — no more of that! My heart will else
O'erflow, and I've already said too much.

DOMINGO.

The king is minded, ere the set of sun,
To reach Madrid: I see the Court is mustering.
Have I permission, prince?

CARLOS.

I'll follow straight.

[*Exit* DOMINGO.

CARLOS (*after a short silence*).

O, wretched Philip! wretched as thy son!
Soon shall thy bosom bleed at ev'ry pore,
Torn by suspicion's poisonous serpent fang.
Thy fell sagacity full soon shall pierce
The fatal secret it is bent to know,
And thou wilt madden, when it breaks upon thee!

SCENE II.

CARLOS, MARQUIS OF POSA.

CARLOS.

Lo! Who comes here? 'Tis he! O, ye kind heavens,
My Roderigo!

MARQUIS.

Carlos!

CARLOS.

Can it be?
And is it truly thou? O yes, it is!
I press thee to my bosom, and I feel
Thy throbbing heart beat wildly 'gainst mine own.
And now all's well again. In this embrace
My sick, sad heart is comforted. I hang
Upon my Roderigo's neck!

MARQUIS.

Thy heart!
Thy sick, sad heart! And what is well again —
What needeth to be well? Thy words amaze me.

CARLOS.

What brings thee back so suddenly from Brussels?
Whom must I thank for this most glad surprise?
And dare I ask? Whom should I thank but thee,
Thou gracious and all bounteous Providence?
Forgive me, Heaven! if joy hath crazed my brain.
Thou knew'st, no angel watch'd at Carlos' side,
And sent me this! And yet I ask who sent him?

MARQUIS.

Pardon, dear prince, if I can only meet
With wonder these tumultuous ecstasies.
Not thus I look'd to find Don Philip's son.
A hectic red burns on your pallid cheek,
And your lips quiver with a feverish heat.
What must I think, dear prince? No more I see
The youth of lion heart, to whom I come
The envoy of a brave and suffering people.
For now I stand not here as Roderigo, —
Not as the playmate of the stripling Carlos, —
But, as the deputy of all mankind,

I clasp thee thus: 'tis Flanders that clings here
Around thy neck, appealing with my tears
To thee for succour in her bitter need.
This land is lost, this land so dear to thee,
If Alva, bigotry's relentless tool,
Advance on Brussels with his Spanish laws.
This noble country's last faint hope depends
On thee, lov'd scion of imperial Charles!
And, should thy noble heart forget to beat,
In human nature's cause, Flanders is lost!

CARLOS.

Then it is lost!

MARQUIS.

What do I hear? Alas!

CARLOS.

Thou speak'st of times that long have pass'd away.
I, too, have had my visions of a Carlos,
Whose cheek would fire at freedom's glorious name.
But he, alas! has long been in his grave.
He, thou seest here, no longer is that Carlos,
Who took his leave of thee in Alcala,
Who, in the fervour of a youthful heart,
Resolv'd, at some no distant time, to wake
The golden age in Spain! O the conceit,
Though but a child's, was yet divinely fair!
Those dreams are past!

MARQUIS.

Said you, those dreams, my prince!
And were they only dreams?

CARLOS.

O let me weep,
Upon thy bosom weep these burning tears,

My only friend! Not one have I — not one —
In the wide circuit of this earth, —not one.
Far as the sceptre of my sire extends,
Far as his navies bear the flag of Spain,
There is no spot — none — none, where I dare yield
An outlet to my tears, save only this.
I charge thee, Roderigo! O, by all
The hopes we both do entertain of heaven,
Cast me not off from thee, my friend, my friend!
[POSA *bends over him in silent emotion.*
Look on me, Posa, as an orphan child,
Found near the throne, and nurtured by thy love.
Indeed, I know not what a father is.
I am a monarch's son. — O, were it so,
As my heart tells me that it surely is,
That thou from millions hast been chosen out
To comprehend my being; if it be true,
That all-creating nature has designed
In me to reproduce a Roderigo,
And on the morning of our life attuned
Our souls' soft concords to the selfsame key;
If one poor tear, which gives my heart relief,
To thee were dearer than my father's favour —

MARQUIS.

O, it is dearer far than all the world!

CARLOS.

I'm fallen so low, have grown so poor withal,
I must recall to thee our childhood's years, —
Must ask thee payment of a debt incurr'd
When thou and I were scarce to boyhood grown.
Dost thou remember, how we grew together,
Two daring youths, like brothers, side by side?
I had no sorrow but to see myself
Eclipsed by thy bright genius. So I vow'd,

Since I might never cope with thee in power,
That I would love thee with excess of love.
Then with a thousand shows of tenderness,
And warm affection, I besieged thy heart,
Which cold and proudly still repulsed them all.
Oft have I stood, and — yet thou saw'st it never —
Hot bitter tear-drops brimming in mine eyes,
When I have mark'd thee, passing me unheeded,
Fold to thy bosom youths of humbler birth.
"Why only these?" in anguish once I asked —
"Am I not kind and good to thee as they?"
But dropping on thy knees, thine answer came,
With an unloving look of cold reserve,
"This is my duty to the monarch's son!"

MARQUIS.

O spare me, dearest prince, nor now recall
Those boyish acts that make me blush for shame.

CARLOS.

I did not merit such disdain from thee —
You might despise me, crush my heart, but never
Alter my love. Three times didst thou repulse
The prince, and thrice he came to thee again,
To beg thy love, and force on thee his own.
At length chance wrought what Carlos never could.
Once we were playing, when thy shuttlecock
Glanced off and struck my aunt, Bohemia's queen,
Full in the face! She thought, 'twas with intent,
And all in tears complain'd unto the king.
The palace youth were summoned on the spot,
And charged to name the culprit. — High in wrath,
The king vowed vengeance for the deed: "Although
It were his son, yet still should he be made
A dread example!" I look'd around, and mark'd

Thee stand aloof, all trembling with dismay.
Straight I stepp'd forth; before the royal feet
I flung myself, and cried — "'Twas I who did it,
Now let thine anger fall upon thy son!"

MARQUIS.

Ah! wherefore, prince, remind me?

CARLOS.

Hear me farther!
Before the face of the assembled court,
That stood, all pale with pity, round about,
Thy Carlos was tied up, whipt like a slave —
I look'd on thee and wept not. Blow rain'd on blow;
I gnash'd my teeth with pain, yet wept I not!
My royal blood stream'd 'neath the pitiless lash;
I look'd on thee, and wept not. Then you came,
And fell half choked with sobs before my feet:
"Carlos," you cried, "my pride is overcome;
I will repay thee when thou art a king."

MARQUIS (*stretching forth his hand to* CARLOS).

Carlos, I'll keep my word: my boyhood's vow
I now as man renew. I will repay thee.
Some day, perchance, the hour may come —

CARLOS.

Now! now
The hour has come; thou canst repay me all.
I have sore need of love. A fearful secret
Burns in my breast; it must — it must be told.
In thy pale looks my death-doom will I read.
Listen — be petrified — but answer not.
I love — I love — my mother!

MARQUIS.

O my God!

CARLOS.

Nay, no forbearance! Spare me not! Speak! speak —
Proclaim aloud, that on this earth's great round
There is no misery to compare with mine.
Speak, speak! — I know all — all that thou canst say!
The son doth love his mother. All the world's
Established usages, — the course of nature, —
Rome's fearful laws, denounce my fatal passion.
My suit conflicts with my own father's rights:
I feel it all, and yet I love. This path
Leads on to madness, or the scaffold. I
Love without hope — love guiltily — love madly,
With anguish, and with peril of my life;
I see, I see it all, and yet I love.

MARQUIS.

The queen — does she know of your passion?

CARLOS.

Could I
Reveal it to her? She is Philip's wife, —
She is the queen, and this is Spanish ground.
Watch'd by a jealous father, hemm'd around
By ceremonial forms, how, how could I
Approach her unobserved? 'Tis now eight months,
Eight maddening months, since the king summoned me
Home from my studies, — since I have been doom'd
To look on her, — adore her, day by day,
And all the while be silent as the grave!
Eight maddening months, Roderigo, — think of this! —
This fire has seethed and raged within my breast!
A thousand, thousand times, the dread confession
Has mounted to my lips! — yet evermore

Shrunk, like a craven, back upon my heart.
Oh, Roderigo! — for a few brief moments
Alone with her!

MARQUIS.

Ah! and your father, prince!

CARLOS.

Unhappy me! Remind me not of him.
Tell me of all the torturing pangs of conscience,
But speak not, I implore you, of my father!

MARQUIS.

Then do you hate your father?

CARLOS.

No, oh, no!
I do not hate my father; but the fear
That guilty creatures feel, — a shuddering dread,
Comes o'er me ever at that terrible name.
Am I to blame, if slavish nurture crush'd
Love's tender germ within my youthful heart?
Six years I'd numbered, ere the fearful man,
They told me was my father, met mine eyes.
One morning 'twas, when with a stroke I saw him
Sign four death-warrants. After that I ne'er
Beheld him, save when, for some childish fault,
I was brought out for chastisement. O God!
I feel my heart grow bitter at the thought.
Let us away! away!

MARQUIS.

Nay, Carlos, nay,
You must, you shall give all your sorrow vent.
Let it have words! 'twill ease your o'erfraught heart.

CARLOS.

Oft have I struggled with myself, and oft
At midnight, when my guards were sunk in sleep,
With floods of burning tears I've sunk before
The image of the ever-blessed Virgin,
And craved a filial heart, but all in vain.
I rose with prayer unheard. O Roderigo!
Unfold this wondrous mystery of Heaven,
Why of a thousand fathers only this
Should fall to me — and why to him this son,
Of many thousand better? Nature could not
In her wide orb have found two opposites
More diverse in their elements. How could
She bind the two extremes of human kind —
Myself and him — in one so holy bond?
O dreadful fate! Why was it so decreed?
Why should two men, in all things else apart,
Concur so fearfully in one desire?
Roderigo, here thou seest two hostile stars,
That in the lapse of ages, only once,
As they sweep onwards in their orbed course,
Touch with a crash that shakes them to the centre,
Then rush apart for ever and for ever.

MARQUIS.

I feel a dire foreboding.

CARLOS.

So do I.
Like hell's grim furies, dreams of dreadful shape
Pursue me still. My better genius strives
With the fell projects of a dark despair.
My wildered subtle spirit crawls through maze
On maze of sophistries, until at length
It gains a yawning precipice's brink.
O, Roderigo! should I e'er in him

Forget the father — ah! thy deathlike look
Tells me I'm understood — should I forget
The father — what were then the king to me?

MARQUIS (*after a pause*).

One thing, my Carlos, let me beg of you!
Whate'er may be your plans, do nothing, — nothing, —
Without your friend's advice. You promise this?

CARLOS.

All, all I promise that thy love can ask!
I throw myself entirely upon thee!

MARQUIS.

The king, I hear, is going to Madrid.
The time is short. If with the queen you would
Converse in private, it is only here,
Here in Aranjuez, it can be done.
The quiet of the place, the freer manners,
All favour you.

CARLOS.

And such, too, was my hope;
But it, alas! was vain.

MARQUIS.

Not wholly so.
I go to wait upon her. If she be
The same in Spain she was in Henry's court,
She will be frank at least. And if I can
Read any hope for Carlos in her looks —
Find her inclined to grant an interview —
Get her attendant ladies sent away —

CARLOS.

Most of them are my friends — especially
The Countess Mondecar, whom I have gain'd
By service to her son, my page.

MARQUIS.

'Tis well;
Be you at hand, and ready to appear,
Whene'er I give the signal, prince.

CARLOS.

I will, —
Be sure, I will: — and all good speed attend thee!

MARQUIS.

I will not lose a moment; so farewell.

[*Exeunt severally.*

Scene III.

The Queen's Residence in Aranjuez. — The Pleasure Grounds, intersected by an Avenue, terminated by the Queen's Palace.

The Queen, Duchess of Olivarez, Princess of Eboli, *and* Marchioness of Mondecar, *all advancing from the avenue.*

QUEEN (*to the* MARCHIONESS).

I will have you beside me, Mondecar.
The princess, with these merry eyes of hers,
Has plagued me all the morning. See, she scarce
Can hide the joy she feels to leave the country.

EBOLI.

'Twere idle to conceal, my queen, that I
Shall be most glad to see Madrid once more.

MONDECAR.

And will your Majesty not be so, too?
Are you so griev'd to quit Aranjuez?

QUEEN.

To quit — this lovely spot at least, I am.
This is my world. Its sweetness oft and oft
Has twined itself around my inmost heart.
Here, nature, simple, rustic nature greets me,
The sweet companion of my early years —
Here I indulge once more my childhood's sports,
And my dear France's gales come blowing here.
Blame not this partial fondness — all hearts yearn
For their own native land.

EBOLI.

But then how lone,
How dull and lifeless is it here! We might
As well be in La Trappe.

QUEEN.

I cannot see it.
To me Madrid alone is lifeless. But
What saith our duchess to it?

OLIVAREZ.

Why, methinks,
Your Majesty, since kings have ruled in Spain,
It hath been still the custom for the court
To pass the summer months alternately
Here and at Pardo, — in Madrid, the winter.

QUEEN.

Well, I suppose it has! Duchess, you know
I've long resign'd all argument with you.

MONDECAR.

Next month, Madrid will be all life and bustle.
They're fitting up the Plaza Mayor now,
And we shall have rare bull-fights; and, besides,
A grand auto da fé is promised us.

QUEEN.

Promised? This from my gentle Mondecar!

MONDECAR.

Why not? 'Tis only heretics they burn!

QUEEN.

I hope my Eboli thinks otherwise!

EBOLI.

What, I? I beg your Majesty may think me
As good a Christian as the marchioness.

QUEEN.

Alas! I had forgotten where I am. —
No more of this! We were speaking, I think,
About the country? And methinks this month
Has flown away with strange rapidity.
I counted on much pleasure, very much,
From our retirement here, and yet I have not
Found that which I expected. Is it thus
With all our hopes? And yet I cannot say
One wish of mine is left ungratified.

OLIVAREZ.

You have not told us, Princess Eboli,
If there be hope for Gomez, — and if we may
Expect ere long to greet you as his bride?

QUEEN.

True — thank you, duchess, for reminding me!
[*Addressing the* PRINCESS.
I have been ask'd to urge his suit with you.
But can I do it?. The man, whom I reward
With my sweet Eboli, must be a man
Of noble stamp indeed.

OLIVAREZ.

And such he is,
A man of mark and fairest fame, — a man
Whom our dear monarch signally has graced
With his most royal favour.

QUEEN.

He's happy in
Such high good fortune; but we fain would know,
If he can love, and win return of love.
This Eboli must answer.

EBOLI (*stands speechless and confused, her eyes bent on the ground; at last she falls at the* QUEEN'S *feet*).

Gracious queen!
Have pity on me! Let me — let me not, —
For Heaven's sake, let me not be sacrificed.

QUEEN.

Be sacrificed! I need no more. Arise!
'Tis a hard fortune to be sacrificed.

I do believe you. Rise. And is it long
Since you rejected Gomez' suit?

EBOLI.

Some months —
Before Prince Carlos came from Alcala.

QUEEN (*starts and looks at her with an inquisitive glance*).

Have you tried well the grounds of your refusal?

EBOLI (*with energy*).

It cannot be, my queen, no, never, never, —
For a thousand reasons, never!

QUEEN.

One's enough.
You do not love him. That suffices me.
Now let it pass. [*To her other ladies.*
I have not seen the infanta
Yet this morning. Pray bring her, marchioness.

OLIVAREZ (*looking at the clock*).

It is not yet the hour, your Majesty.

QUEEN.

Not yet the hour for me to be a mother!
That's somewhat hard. Forget not, then, to tell me
When the right hour does come.

[*A Page enters and whispers to the first lady, who thereupon turns to the* QUEEN.

OLIVAREZ.

The Marquis Posa,
May 't please your Majesty.

QUEEN.

The Marquis Posa!

OLIVAREZ.

He comes from France, and from the Netherlands,
And craves the honour to present some letters
Entrusted to him by your royal mother.

QUEEN.

Is this allow'd?

OLIVAREZ (*hesitating*).

A case so unforeseen
Is not provided for in my instructions,
When a Castilian grandee, with despatches
From foreign courts, shall in her garden find
The Queen of Spain, and tender them —

QUEEN.

Enough!
I'll venture, then, on mine own proper peril.

OLIVAREZ.

May I, your Majesty, withdraw the while?

QUEEN.

E'en as you please, good duchess!

[*Exit the* DUCHESS, *the* QUEEN *gives the Page a sign, who thereupon retires.*

Scene IV.

The Queen, Princess Eboli, Marchioness of Mondecar, *and* Marquis of Posa.

QUEEN.

I bid you welcome, sir, to Spanish ground!

MARQUIS.

Ground, which I never with so just a pride
Hail'd for the country of my sires, as now.

QUEEN (*to the two ladies*).

The Marquis Posa, ladies, who at Rheims
Coped with my father in the lists, and made
My colours thrice victorious; the first,
That made me feel how proud a thing it was
To be the Queen of Spain and Spanish men.
[*Turning to the* Marquis.
When we last parted at the Louvre, sir,
You scarcely dreamed that I should ever be
Your hostess in Castile.

MARQUIS.

Most true, my liege!
For at that time I never could have dream'd
That France should lose to us the only thing
We envied her possessing.

QUEEN.

How, proud Spaniard!
The only thing! And you can venture this —
This, to a daughter of the house of Valois!

MARQUIS.

I venture now to say it, gracious queen,
Since now you are our own.

QUEEN.

Your journey hither
Has led you, as I hear, thro' France. What news
Have you brought with you from my honour'd mother,
And from my dearest brothers?

MARQUIS (*handing letters*).

I left your royal mother sick at heart,
Bereft of every joy, save only this,
To know her daughter happy on the throne
Of our imperial Spain.

QUEEN.

Could she be aught
But happy, in the dear remembrances
Of relatives so kind — in the sweet thoughts
Of the old time, when — Sir, you've visited
Full many a court in these your various travels,
And seen strange lands and customs manifold;
And now, they say, you mean to keep at home,
A greater prince, in your retired domain,
Than is King Philip on his throne — a freer.
You're a philosopher: but much I doubt
If our Madrid will please you. We are so —
So quiet in Madrid.

MARQUIS.

And that is more
Than all the rest of Europe has to boast.

QUEEN.

I've heard as much. But all this world's concerns
Are well-nigh blotted from my memory.
[*To* PRINCESS EBOLI.
Princess, methinks I see a hyacinth
Yonder, in bloom. Wilt bring it to me, sweet?
[*The* PRINCESS *goes toward the place, the* QUEEN *softly to the* MARQUIS.
I'm much mistaken, sir, or your arrival
Has made one heart more happy here at court.

MARQUIS.

I have found a sad one — one that in this world
A ray of sunshine —

EBOLI.

As this gentleman
Has seen so many countries, he, no doubt,
Has much of note to tell us.

MARQUIS.

Doubtless, and
To seek adventures is a knight's first duty —
But his most sacred is to shield the fair.

MONDECAR.

From giants! But there are no giants now!

MARQUIS.

Power is a giant ever to the weak.

QUEEN.

The chevalier says well. There still are giants;
But there are knights no more.

MARQUIS.

Not long ago,
On my return from Naples, I became
The witness of a very touching story,
Which ties of friendship almost make my own.
Were I not fearful its recital might
Fatigue your Majesty —

QUEEN.

Have I a choice?
The princess is not to be lightly balked.
Proceed. I too, sir, love a story dearly.

MARQUIS.

Two noble houses in Mirandola,
Wearied of jealousies and deadly feuds,
Transmitted down from Guelphs and Ghibellines,
Through centuries of hate, from sire to son,
Resolved to ratify a lasting peace
By the sweet ministry of nuptial ties.
Fernando, nephew of the great Pietro,
And fair Matilda, old Colonna's child,
Were chosen to cement this holy bond.
Nature had never for each other form'd
Two fairer hearts. And never had the world
Approved a wiser or a happier choice.
Still had the youth adored his lovely bride
In the dull limner's portraiture alone.
How thrill'd his heart, then, in the hope to find
The truth of all that e'en his fondest dreams
Had scarcely dared to credit in her picture!
In Padua, where his studies held him bound,
Fernando panted for the joyful hour,
When he might murmur at Matilda's feet
The first pure homage of his fervent love.

[*The* QUEEN *grows more attentive; the* MARQUIS *continues, after a short pause, addressing himself chiefly to* PRINCESS EBOLI.

Meanwhile the sudden death of Pietro's wife
Had left him free to wed. With the hot glow
Of youthful blood the hoary lover drinks
The fame that reach'd him of Matilda's charms.
He comes — he sees — he loves! The new desire
Stifles the voice of nature in his heart.
The uncle woos his nephew's destined bride,
And at the altar consecrates this theft.

QUEEN.

And what did then Fernando?

MARQUIS.

On the wings
Of love, unconscious of the fearful change,
Delirious with the promis'd joy, he speeds
Back to Mirandola. His flying steed
By starlight gains the gate. Tumultuous sounds
Of music, dance, and jocund revelry
Ring from the walls of the illumin'd palace.
With faltering steps he mounts the stair; and now
Behold him in the crowded nuptial hall,
Unrecognised! Amid the reeling guests
Pietro sat. An angel at his side —
An angel, whom he knows, and who to him,
Even in his dreams, seem'd ne'er so beautiful.
A single glance reveal'd what once was his, —
Reveal'd what now was lost to him for ever.

EBOLI.

O poor Fernando!

QUEEN.

Surely, sir, your tale
Is ended? Nay, it must be.

MARQUIS.

No, not quite.

QUEEN.

Did you not say, Fernando was your friend?

MARQUIS.

I have no dearer in the world.

EBOLI.

But pray
Proceed, sir, with your story.

MARQUIS.

Nay, the rest
Is very sad — and to recall it sets
My sorrow fresh abroach. Spare me the sequel.
[*A general silence.*

QUEEN (*turning to the* PRINCESS EBOLI).

Surely the time is come to see my daughter;
I prithee, princess, bring her to me now!

[*The* PRINCESS *withdraws. The* MARQUIS *beckons a Page. The* QUEEN *opens the letters, and appears surprised. The* MARQUIS *talks with* MARCHIONESS MONDECAR. *The* QUEEN, *having read the letters, turns to the* MARQUIS *with a penetrating look.*

QUEEN.

You have not spoken of Matilda! — She
Haply was ignorant of Fernando's grief?

MARQUIS.

Matilda's heart has no one fathom'd yet —
Great souls endure in silence.

QUEEN.

You look around you. Who is it you seek?

MARQUIS.

Just then the thought came over me, how one,
Whose name I dare not mention, would rejoice,
Stood he where I do now.

QUEEN.

And who's to blame,
That he does not?

MARQUIS (*interrupting her eagerly*).

My liege! And dare I venture
To interpret thee, as fain I would? He'd find
Forgiveness, then, if now he should appear.

QUEEN (*alarmed*).

Now, marquis, now? What do you mean by this?

MARQUIS.

Might he, then, hope?

QUEEN.

You terrify me, marquis.
Surely he will not —

MARQUIS.

He is here already.

Scene V.

The Queen, Carlos, Marquis Posa, Marchioness Mondecar. *The two latter go toward the Avenue.*

CARLOS (*on his knees before the* QUEEN).

At length 'tis come — the happy moment's come,
And Charles may touch this all-beloved hand.

QUEEN.

What headlong folly's this? And dare you break
Into my presence thus? Arise, rash man!
We are observed; my suite are close at hand.

CARLOS.

I will not rise. Here will I kneel for ever,
Here will I lie enchanted at your feet,
And grow to the dear ground you tread on!

QUEEN.

Madman!
To what rude boldness my indulgence leads!
Know you, it is the queen, your mother, sir,
Whom you address in such presumptuous strain?
Know, that myself will to the king report
This bold intrusion —

CARLOS.

And that I must die!
Let them come here, and drag me to the scaffold!
A moment spent in paradise, like this,
Is not too dearly purchased by a life.

QUEEN.

But then your queen? —

CARLOS (*rising*).

O God, I'll go, I'll go!
Can I refuse to bend to that appeal?
I am your very plaything. Mother, mother,
A sign, a transient glance, one broken word
From those dear lips can bid me live or die.
What would you more? Is there beneath the sun
One thing I would not haste to sacrifice,
To meet your lightest wish?

QUEEN.

Then fly!

CARLOS.

O God!

QUEEN.

With tears I do conjure you, Carlos, fly!
I ask no more. O fly! before my court,
My guards, detecting us alone together,
Bear the dread tidings to your father's ear.

CARLOS.

I bide my doom, or be it life or death.
Have I staked every hope on this one moment
Which gives thee to me, thus at length alone,
That idle fears should balk me of my purpose?
No, queen! The world may round its axis roll
A hundred thousand times, ere chance again
Yield to my prayers a moment such as this.

QUEEN.

It never shall to all eternity.
Unhappy man! What would you ask of me?

CARLOS.

Heaven is my witness, queen, how I have struggled,
Struggled as mortal never did before.
But all in vain! My manhood fails — I yield.

QUEEN.

No more of this — for *my* sake — for my peace —

CARLOS.

You were mine own, — in face of all the world, —
Affianced to me by two mighty crowns,
By Heaven and nature plighted as my bride,
But Philip, cruel Philip, stole you from me.

QUEEN.

He is your father!

CARLOS.

And he is your husband!

QUEEN.

And gives to you, for an inheritance,
The mightiest monarchy in all the world!

CARLOS.

And you, as mother!

QUEEN.

Mighty Heavens! You rave!

CARLOS.

And is he even conscious of his treasure?
Hath he a heart to feel and value yours?
I'll not complain — no, no, I will forget,
How happy, past all utterance, I might
Have been with you, — if he were only so.
But he is not — there, there the anguish lies!
He is not, and he never — never can be.
O, you have robb'd me of my paradise,
Only to blast it in King Philip's arms!

QUEEN.

Horrible thought!

CARLOS.

O yes, right well I know
Who 'twas that knit this ill-starr'd marriage up.
I know how Philip loves, and how he wooed.
What are you in this kingdom — tell me, what?
Regent, belike! Oh, no! if such you were,
How could fell Alvas act their murderous deeds,
Or Flanders bleed a martyr for her faith?
Are you e'en Philip's wife? Impossible —
Beyond belief. A wife doth still possess
Her husband's heart. To whom doth his belong?
If e'er, perchance, in some hot feverish mood,
He yields to gentler impulse, begs he not
Forgiveness of his sceptre and gray hairs?

QUEEN.

Who told you that my lot, at Philip's side,
Was one for men to pity?

CARLOS.

My own heart!
Which feels, with burning pangs, how at my side
It had been to be envied.

QUEEN.

Thou vain man,
What if my heart should tell me the reverse?
How, sir, if Philip's watchful tenderness,
The looks that silently proclaim his love,
Touch'd me more deeply, than his haughty son's
Presumptuous eloquence? What, if an old man's
Matured esteem —

CARLOS.

That makes a difference! Then,
Why then, forgiveness! — I'd no thought of this;
I had no thought that you could love the king.

QUEEN.

To honour him's my pleasure and my wish.

CARLOS.

Then you have never loved?

QUEEN.

Singular question!

CARLOS.

Then you have never loved?

QUEEN.

I love no longer!

CARLOS.

Because your heart forbids it, or your oath?

QUEEN.

Leave me; nor ever touch this theme again.

CARLOS.

Because your oath forbids it, or your heart?

QUEEN.

Because my duty — but, alas, alas!
To what avails this scrutiny of fate,
Which we must both obey?

CARLOS.

Must — must obey?

QUEEN.

What means this solemn tone?

CARLOS.

Thus much it means:
That Carlos is not one to yield to *must*,
Where he hath power to *will!* It means, besides,
That Carlos is not minded to live on,
The most unhappy man in all this realm,
When it would only cost the overthrow
Of Spanish laws to be the happiest.

QUEEN.

Do I interpret rightly? Still you hope?
Dare you hope on, where all is lost for ever?

CARLOS.

I look on nought as lost — except the dead.

QUEEN.

For me — your mother, do you dare to hope?
[*She fixes a penetrating look on him, then continues with dignity and earnestness.*

And yet why not? A new elected monarch
Can do far more — make bonfires of the laws
His father left — o'erthrow his monuments —
Nay, more than this — for what shall hinder him? —
Drag from his tomb, in the Escurial,
The sacred corpse of his departed sire,
Make it a public spectacle, and scatter
Forth to the winds his desecrated dust.
And then, at last, to fill the measure up, —

CARLOS.

Merciful Heavens, finish not the picture!

QUEEN.

End all by wedding with his mother.

CARLOS.

Oh!

Accursed son!

[*He remains for some time paralysed and speechless.*

Yes, now 'tis out, 'tis out!
I see it clear as day. O, would it had
Been veil'd from me in everlasting darkness!
Yes, thou art gone from me — gone — gone for ever.
The die is cast; and thou art lost to me.
Oh, in that thought lies hell; and a hell, too,
Lies in the other thought, to call thee mine.
Oh misery! I can bear my fate no longer,
My very heart-strings strain as they would burst.

QUEEN.

Alas, alas! dear Charles, I feel it all,
The nameless pang that rages in your breast;
Your pangs are infinite, as is your love,
And infinite as both will be the glory
Of overmastering both. Up, be a man,

Wrestle with them boldly. The prize is worthy
Of a young warrior's high, heroic heart;
Worthy of him in whom the virtues flow
Of a long ancestry of mighty kings.
Courage! my noble prince! Great Charles's grandson
Begins the contest with undaunted heart,
Where sons of meaner men would yield at once!

CARLOS.

Too late, too late! O God, it is too late!

QUEEN.

Too late to be a man! O Carlos, Carlos!
How nobly shows our virtue, when the heart
Breaks in its exercise! The hand of Heaven
Has set you up on high, — far higher, prince,
Than millions of your brethren. All she took
From others, she bestow'd with partial hand
On thee, her favourite; and millions ask,
What was your merit, thus before your birth
To be endowed so far above mankind?
Up, then, and justify the ways of Heaven;
Deserve to take the lead of all the world,
And make a sacrifice ne'er made before.

CARLOS.

I will, I will: — I have a giant's strength
To win your favour; but to lose you, none.

QUEEN.

Confess, my Carlos, I have harshly read thee;
It is but spleen, and waywardness, and pride,
Attract you thus so madly to your mother!
The heart you lavish on myself, belongs
To the great empire you one day shall rule.

Look, that you sport not with your sacred trust!
Love is your high vocation; until now
It hath been wrongly bent upon your mother:
Oh, lead it back upon your future realms,
And so, instead of the fell stings of conscience,
Enjoy the bliss of being more than man.
Elizabeth has been your earliest love,
Your second must be Spain. How gladly, Carlos,
Will I give place to this more worthy choice!

CARLOS (*overpowered by emotion, throws himself at her feet*).

How great thou art, my angel! Yes, I'll do
All, all thou canst desire. So let it be. [*He rises.*
Here, in the sight of Heaven I stand, and swear —
I swear to thee, eternal — no, great Heaven! —
Eternal silence only, — not oblivion.

QUEEN.

How can I ask from you, what I myself
Am not disposed to grant?

MARQUIS (*hastening from the alley*).

The king!

QUEEN.

O God!

MARQUIS.

Away, away! fly from these precincts, prince.

QUEEN.

His jealousy is dreadful — should he see you —

CARLOS.

I'll stay.

QUEEN.

And who will be the victim, then?

CARLOS (*seizing the* MARQUIS *by the arm*).

Away, away! Come, Roderigo, come!
[*Goes and returns.*
What may I hope to carry hence with me?

QUEEN.

Your mother's friendship.

CARLOS.

Friendship! Mother!

QUEEN.

And
These tears with it — they're from the Netherlands.
[*She gives him some letters. — Exit* CARLOS *with the* MARQUIS. *The* QUEEN *looks restlessly round in search of her ladies, who are nowhere to be seen. As she is about to retire up, the* KING *enters.*

SCENE VI.

The KING, *the* QUEEN, DUKE ALVA, COUNT LERMA, DOMINGO, LADIES, GRANDEES, *who remain at a little distance.*

KING.

How, madam, alone? — not even one of all
Your ladies in attendance? Strange! Where are they?

QUEEN.

My gracious lord!

KING.

Why thus alone, I say?
[*To his attendants.*
I'll take a strict account of this neglect.
'Tis not to be forgiven. Who has the charge
Of waiting on your Majesty to-day?

QUEEN.

O be not angry! Good my Lord, 'tis I
Myself that am to blame — at my request
The Princess Eboli went hence but now.

KING.

At your request!

QUEEN.

To call the nurse to me,
With the Infanta, whom I long'd to see.

KING.

And was your retinue dismiss'd for that?
This only clears the lady first in waiting.
Where was the second?

MONDECAR (*who has returned and mixed with the other ladies, steps forward*).

Your Majesty, I feel
I am to blame for this.

KING.

You are, and so
I give you ten years to reflect upon it,
At a most tranquil distance from Madrid.
[*The* MARCHIONESS *steps back weeping. General silence. The bystanders all look in confusion toward the* QUEEN.

QUEEN.

What weep you for, dear marchioness? [*To the* KING.
If I
Have err'd, my gracious liege, the crown I wear,
And which I never sought, should save my blushes.
Is there a law in this your kingdom, Sire,
To summon monarchs' daughters to the bar?
Does force alone restrain your Spanish ladies?
Or need they stronger safeguard than their virtue?
Now pardon me, my liege; 'tis not my wont
To send my ladies, who have served me still
With smiling cheerfulness, away in tears.
Here, Mondecar.

[*She takes off her girdle and presents it to the* MARCHIONESS.

You have displeased the king,
Not me. Take this remembrance of my favour,
And of this hour. I'd have you quit the kingdom.
You've only err'd in Spain. In my dear France,
All men are glad to wipe such tears away.
And must I ever be reminded thus?
In my dear France it had been otherwise.

[*Leaning on the* MARCHIONESS *and covering her face.*

KING.

Can a reproach, that in my love had birth,
Afflict you so? A word so trouble you,
Which the most anxious tenderness did prompt?
[*He turns toward the Grandees.*
Here stand the assembled vassals of my throne.
Did ever sleep descend upon these eyes,
Till at the close of the returning day
I've pondered, how the hearts of all my subjects
Were beating 'neath the furthest cope of Heaven?
And should I feel more anxious for my throne,
Than for the partner of my bosom? No!

My sword and Alva can protect my people,
My eye alone assures thy love.

QUEEN.

My liege,
If that I have offended —

KING.

I am call'd
The richest monarch in the Christian world;
The sun in my dominions never sets.
All this another hath possess'd before,
And many another will possess hereafter.
That is mine own. All that the monarch hath
Belongs to chance — Elizabeth to Philip.
This is the point in which I feel I'm mortal.

QUEEN.

What fear you, Sire?

KING.

Should these gray hairs not fear?
But the same instant that my fear begins,
It dies away for ever. [*To the Grandees.*
I run o'er
The nobles of my court, and miss the foremost.
Where is my son, Don Carlos? [*No one answers.*
He begins
To give me cause of fear. He shuns my presence,
Since he came back from school at Alcala.
His blood is hot. Why is his look so cold?
His bearing all so stately and reserved?
Be watchful, duke, I charge you.

ALVA.

So I am:
Long as a heart against this corslet beats,

So long may Philip slumber undisturb'd;
And as God's Cherub guards the gates of heaven,
So doth Duke Alva guard your royal throne.

LERMA.

Dare I, in all humility, presume
To oppose the judgment of earth's wisest king?
Too deeply I revere his gracious sire,
To judge the son so harshly. I fear much
From his hot blood, but nothing from his heart.

KING.

Lerma, your speech is fair, to soothe the father,
But Alva here will be the monarch's shield —
No more of this. [*Turning to his Suite.*
Now speed we to Madrid.
Our royal duties summon us. The plague
Of heresy is rife among my people;
Rebellion stalks within my Netherlands —
The times are imminent. We must arrest
These erring spirits by some dread example.
The solemn oath which every Christian king
Hath sworn to keep, I will redeem to-morrow;
'Twill be a day of doom unparallel'd.
Our court is bidden to the festival.
[*He leads off the* QUEEN, *the rest follow.*

SCENE VII.

DON CARLOS (*with letters in his hand*) *and* MARQUIS POSA *enter from opposite sides.*

CARLOS.

I am resolved — Flanders shall yet be saved:
So runs her suit — and that's enough for me!

MARQUIS.

There's not another moment to be lost
'Tis said Duke Alva, in the Cabinet,
Is named already as the governor.

CARLOS.

Betimes, to-morrow, will I seek the king,
And ask this office for myself. It is
The first request I ever made to him,
And he can scarce refuse. My presence here
Has long been irksome to him. He will grasp
This fair pretence my absence to secure.
And shall I confess to thee, Roderigo? —
My hopes go further. Face to face with him,
'Tis possible, the pleading of a son
May reinstate him in his father's favour.
He ne'er hath heard the voice of nature speak;
Then let me try for once, my Roderigo,
What power she hath when breathing from my lips.

MARQUIS.

Now do I hear my Carlos' voice once more;
Now are you all yourself again!

Scene VIII.

The preceding. Count Lerma.

COUNT.

Your Grace,
His Majesty has left Aranjuez;
And I am bidden —

CARLOS.

Very well, my lord —
I shall o'ertake the king —

MARQUIS (*affecting to take leave with ceremony*).

Your Highness, then,
Has nothing further to entrust to me?

CARLOS.

Nothing. A pleasant journey to Madrid!
You may, hereafter, tell me more of Flanders.
[*To* LERMA, *who is waiting for him.*
Proceed, my lord! I'll follow thee anon.

SCENE IX.

DON CARLOS, MARQUIS POSA.

CARLOS.

I understood thy hint, and thank thee for it.
A stranger's presence can alone excuse
This forced and measured tone. Are we not brothers?
In future, let this puppet-play of rank
Be banish'd from our friendship. Think that we
Had met at some gay masking festival,
Thou in the habit of a slave, and I
Robed, for a jest, in the imperial purple.
Throughout the revel we respect the cheat,
And play our parts with sportive earnestness,
Tripping it gaily with the merry throng;
But should thy Carlos beckon through his mask,
Thou'dst press his hand in silence as he pass'd,
And we should be as one.

MARQUIS.

The dream's divine!
But are you sure, that it will last for ever?
Is Carlos, then, so certain of himself,
As to despise the charms of boundless sway?

A day will come — an all-important day —
When this heroic mind — I warn you now —
Will sink o'erwhelm'd by too severe a test.
Don Philip dies; and Carlos mounts the throne,
The mightiest throne in Christendom. How vast
The gulf that yawns betwixt mankind and him —
A god to-day, who yesterday was man!
Steel'd to all human weakness — to the voice
Of heavenly duty deaf. Humanity, —
To-day a word of import in his ear, —
Barters itself, and grovels 'mid the throng
Of gaping parasites; — his sympathy
For human woe is turn'd to cold neglect,
His virtue sunk in loose voluptuous joys.
Peru supplies him riches for his folly,
His court engenders devils for his vices.
Lull'd in this heaven, the work of crafty slaves,
He sleeps a charmed sleep; and while his dream
Endures, his godhead lasts. And woe to him,
Who'd break, in pity, this lethargic trance!
What could Roderigo do? Friendship is true,
And bold as true. But her bright flashing beams
Were much too fierce for sickly majesty:
You would not brook a subject's stern appeal,
Nor I, a monarch's pride!

CARLOS.

Fearful and true,
Thy portraiture of monarchs. Yes — thou'rt right.
But 'tis their lusts that thus corrupt their hearts,
And hurry them to vice. I still am pure.
A youth scarce numbering three-and-twenty years.
What thousands waste in riotous delights,
Without remorse — the mind's more precious part —
The bloom and strength of manhood — I have kept,
Hoarding their treasures for the future king.

What could unseat my Posa from my heart,
If women fail to do it?

MARQUIS.

I, myself!
Say, could I love you, Carlos, warm as now,
If I must fear you?

CARLOS.

That will never be.
What need hast thou of me? What cause hast thou
To stoop thy knee, a suppliant at the throne?
Does gold allure thee? Thou'rt a richer subject,
Than I shall be a king! Dost covet honours?
E'en in thy youth, fame's brimming chalice stood
Full in thy grasp — thou flung'st the toy away.
Which of us, then, must be the other's debtor,
And which the creditor? Thou standest mute.
Dost tremble for the trial? Art thou, then,
Uncertain of thyself?

MARQUIS.

Carlos, I yield!
Here is my hand.

CARLOS.

Is it mine own?

MARQUIS.

For ever —
In the most pregnant meaning of the word!

CARLOS.

And wilt thou prove hereafter to the king,
As true and warm as to the prince to-day?

MARQUIS.

I swear.

CARLOS.

And when round my unguarded heart
The serpent flattery winds its subtle coil,
Should e'er these eyes of mine forget the tears
They once were wont to shed: or should these ears
Be closed to mercy's plea, — say, wilt thou, then,
The fearless guardian of my virtue, throw
Thine iron grasp upon me, and call up
My genius by its mighty name?

MARQUIS.

I will.

CARLOS.

And now one other favour let me beg.
Do call me *thou!* Long have I envied this
Dear privilege of friendship to thine equals.
The brother's *thou* beguiles my ear, my heart,
With sweet suggestions of equality.
Nay, no reply — I guess what thou wouldst say —
To thee this seems a trifle — but to me,
A monarch's son, 'tis much. Say, wilt thou be
A brother to me?

MARQUIS.

Yes; thy brother, yes!

CARLOS.

Now to the king — my fears are at an end;
Thus, arm in arm with thee, I dare defy
The universal world into the lists. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

Scene I.

The Royal Palace at Madrid.

King Philip *under a canopy;* Duke Alva, *at some distance, with his head covered;* Carlos.

CARLOS.

The kingdom takes precedence — willingly
Doth Carlos to the minister give place —
He speaks for Spain; I am but of the household.
[*Bows and steps backward.*

KING.

The duke remains — the Infanta may proceed.

CARLOS (*turning to* ALVA).

Then must I put it to your honour, sir,
To yield my father for a while to me.
A son, you know, may to a father's ear
Unbosom much, in fulness of his heart,
That not befits a stranger's ear. The king
Shall not be taken from you, sir — I seek
The father only for one little hour.

KING.

Here stands his friend.

CARLOS.

And have I e'er deserved
To think the duke should be a friend of mine?

KING.

Or tried to make him one? I scarce can love
Those sons who choose more wisely than their fathers.

CARLOS.

And can Duke Alva's knightly spirit brook
To look on such a scene? Now, as I live,
I would not play the busy meddler's part,
Who thrusts himself, unask'd, 'twixt sire and son,
And there intrudes without a blush, condemn'd
By his own conscious insignificance,
No, not, by Heaven, to win a diadem!

KING (*rising, with an angry look at the* PRINCE).

Retire, my lord!

[ALVA *goes to the principal door, through which* CARLOS *had entered, the* KING *points to the other.*

No, to the Cabinet,
Until I call you.

SCENE II.

KING PHILIP, DON CARLOS.

CARLOS (*as soon as the* DUKE *has left the Apartment, advances to the* KING, *throws himself at his feet, and then, with great emotion*).

My father once again!
Thanks, endless thanks, for this unwonted favour!
Your hand, my father! O delightful day!
The rapture of this kiss has long been strange
To your poor Carlos. Wherefore have I been
Shut from my father's heart? What have I done?

KING.

Carlos, thou art a novice in these arts —
Forbear, I like them not —

CARLOS (*rising*).

And is it so!
I hear your courtiers in those words, my father!
All is not well, by Heaven, all is not true,
That a priest says, and a priest's creatures plot.
I am not wicked, father; ardent blood
Is all my failing; — all my crime is youth; —
Wicked I am not — no, in truth, not wicked; —
Tho' many an impulse wild assails my heart,
Yet is it still untainted.

KING.

Ay, 'tis pure —
I know it — like thy prayers —

CARLOS.

Now, then, or never! —
We are, for once, alone — the barrier
Of courtly form, that sever'd sire and son,
Has fallen! Now a golden ray of hope
Illumes my soul — a sweet presentiment
Pervades my heart — and heaven itself inclines
With choirs of joyous angels, to the earth,
And full of soft emotion, the thrice blest
Looks down upon this great, this glorious scene! —
Pardon, my father!

[*He falls on his knees before him.*

KING.

Rise, and leave me.

CARLOS.

Father!

KING (*tearing himself from him*).

This trifling grows too bold.

CARLOS.

A son's devotion
Too bold! Alas!

KING.

And, to crown all, in tears!
Degraded boy! Away, and quit my sight!

CARLOS.

Now, then, or never! — Pardon, O my father!

KING.

Away, and leave my sight! Return to me
Disgraced, defeated, from the battle-field,
Thy sire shall meet thee with extended arms;
But thus in tears, I spurn thee from my feet.
A coward's guilt alone should wash its stains
In such ignoble streams. The man who weeps
Without a blush, will ne'er want cause for tears!

CARLOS.

Who is this man? By what mistake of Nature
Has he thus stray'd amongst mankind? A tear
Is man's unerring, lasting attribute.
Whose eye is dry was ne'er of woman born!
O! teach the eye that ne'er hath overflowed,
The timely science of a tear — thou'lt need
The moist relief in some dark hour of woe.

KING.

Think'st thou to shake thy father's strong mistrust
With specious words?

CARLOS.

Mistrust! Then I'll remove it —
Here will I hang upon my father's breast,
Strain at his heart with vigour, till each shred
Of that mistrust, which, with a rock's endurance,
Clings firmly round it, piecemeal fall away.
And who are they who drive me from the king
My father's favour? — What requital hath
A monk to give a father for a son? —
What compensation can the duke supply
For a deserted and a childless age?
Wouldst thou be loved? Here in this bosom springs
A fresher, purer fountain, than e'er flowed
From those dark, stagnant, muddy reservoirs,
Which Philip's gold must first unlock.

KING.

No more,
Presuming boy! For know the hearts thou slanderest
Are the approved, true servants of my choice.
'Tis meet that thou do honour to them.

CARLOS.

Never!
I know my worth — all that your Alva dares —
That, and much more, can Carlos. What cares he,
A hireling! for the welfare of the realm
That never can be his? What careth he,
If Philip's hair grow gray with hoary age?
Your Carlos would have loved you: — O! I dread
To think that you the royal throne must fill
Deserted and alone.

KING (*seemingly struck by this idea, stands in deep thought, after a pause*).

I am alone!

CARLOS (*approaching him with eagerness*).

You have been so till now. Hate me no more,
And I will love you dearly, as a son:
But hate me now no longer! O! how sweet,
Divinely sweet it is, to feel our being
Reflected in another's beauteous soul;
To see our joys gladden another's cheek,
Our pains bring anguish to another's bosom,
Our sorrows fill another's eye with tears!
How sweet, how glorious is it, hand in hand,
With a dear child, in inmost soul beloved,
To tread once more the rosy paths of youth,
And dream life's fond illusions o'er again!
How proud to live through endless centuries,
Immortal in the virtues of a son;
How sweet to plant what his dear hand shall reap;
To gather what will yield him rich return,
And guess how high his thanks will one day rise!
My father, of this early paradise
Your monks most wisely speak not.

KING (*not without emotion*).

O, my son,
Thou hast condemn'd thyself, in painting thus
A bliss this heart hath ne'er enjoyed from thee!

CARLOS.

Th' Omniscient be my judge! You till this hour
Have still debarr'd me from your heart, and all
Participation in your royal cares.
The heir of Spain has been a very stranger

In Spanish land — a prisoner in the realm
Where he must one day rule. Say, was this just,
Or kind? And often have I blush'd for shame,
And stood with eyes abash'd, to learn perchance,
From foreign envoys, or the general rumour,
Thy courtly doings at Aranjuez.

KING.

Thy blood flows far too hotly in thy veins.
Thou wouldst but ruin all.

CARLOS.

But try me, father!
'Tis true my blood flows hotly in my veins.
Full three and twenty years I now have lived,
And nought achieved for immortality.
I am aroused — I feel my inward powers —
My title to the throne arouses me
From slumber, like an angry creditor;
And all the mis-spent hours of early youth,
Like debts of honour, clamour in mine ears;
It comes at length, the glorious moment comes
That claims full interest on the entrusted talent.
The annals of the world, ancestral fame,
And glory's echoing trumpet urge me on.
Now is the blessed hour at length arrived
That opens wide to me the lists of honour.
My king, my father! — dare I utter now
The suit which led me hither?

KING.

Still a suit?
Unfold it.

CARLOS.

The rebellion in Brabant
Increases to a height — the traitors' madness

By stern, but prudent, vigour must be met.
The duke, to quell the wild enthusiasm,
Invested with the sovereign's power, will lead
An army into Flanders. O, how full
Of glory is such office! — and how suited
To open wide the temple of renown
To me, your son! To my hand, then, O king,
Entrust the army; in thy Flemish lands
I am well loved, and I will freely gage
My life, for their fidelity and truth.

KING.

Thou speakest like a dreamer. This high office
Demands a man — and not a stripling's arm.

CARLOS.

It but demands a human being, father:
And that is what Duke Alva ne'er hath been.

KING.

Terror alone can tie rebellion's hands.
Humanity were madness. Thy soft soul
Is tender, son: they'll tremble at the duke.
Desist from thy request.

CARLOS.

Despatch me, Sire,
To Flanders with the army — dare rely
E'en on my tender soul. The name of prince,
The royal name emblazoned on my standard,
Conquers where Alva's butchers but dismay.
Here on my knees I crave it — this the first
Petition of my life. — Trust Flanders to me.

KING (*contemplating* CARLOS *with a piercing look*).

Trust my best army to thy thirst for rule,
And put a dagger in my murderer's hand!

CARLOS.

Great God! and is this all — is this the fruit
Of a momentous hour so long desired!
[*After some thought, in a milder tone.*
Oh, speak to me more kindly — send me not
Thus comfortless away — dismiss me not
With this afflicting answer, oh, my father!
Use me more tenderly, indeed I need it.
This is the last resource of wild despair —
It conquers every pow'r of firm resolve
To bear it as a man — this deep contempt —
My ev'ry suit denied. Let me away —
Unheard and foil'd in all my fondest hopes,
I take my leave. Now Alva and Domingo
May proudly sit in triumph, where your son
Lies weeping in the dust. Your crowd of courtiers,
And your long train of cringing, trembling nobles,
Your tribe of sallow monks, so deadly pale,
All witness'd how you granted me this audience.
Let me not be disgraced — O, strike me not
With this most deadly wound — nor lay me bare
To sneering insolence of menial taunts!
"That strangers riot on your bounty, whilst
Carlos, your son, may supplicate in vain."
And as a pledge that you would have me honour'd,
Despatch me straight to Flanders with the army.

KING.

Urge thy request no further — as thou wouldst
Avoid the king's displeasure.

CARLOS.

I must brave
My king's displeasure, and prefer my suit
Once more, it is the last. Trust Flanders to me!
I must away from Spain. To linger here
Is to draw breath beneath the headsman's axe:
The air lies heavy on me in Madrid,
Like murder on a guilty soul — a change,
An instant change of clime, alone can cure me.
If you would save my life, despatch me straight
Without delay to Flanders.

KING (*with affected coldness*).

Invalids,
Like thee, my son — need to be tended close,
And ever watched by the physician's eye —
Thou stay'st in Spain — the duke will go to Flanders.

CARLOS (*wildly*).

Assist me, ye good angels!

KING (*starting*).

Hold, what mean
These looks so wild?

CARLOS.

Father, do you abide
Immovably by this determination?

KING.

It was the king's.

CARLOS.

Then my commission's done.

[*Exit in violent emotion.*

Scene III.

KING, *sunk in gloomy contemplation, walks a few steps up and down;* ALVA *approaches with embarrassment.*

KING.

Hold yourself ready to depart for Brussels,
Upon a moment's notice.

ALVA.

I am ready;
All is prepared, my liege.

KING.

And your credentials
Lie ready seal'd within my cabinet, —
Meanwhile obtain an audience of the queen,
And bid the prince farewell.

ALVA.

As I came in
I met him with a look of frenzy wild
Quitting the chamber; and your Majesty
Is strangely moved, methinks, and bears the marks
Of deep excitement — can it be the theme
Of your discourse —

KING.

Concerned the Duke of Alva.
[*The* KING *keeps his eye steadfastly fixed on him.*
I'm pleas'd that Carlos hates my councillors,
But I'm disturb'd that he — despises them.
[ALVA, *colouring deeply, is about to speak.*
No answer now: propitiate the prince.

ALVA.

Sire!

KING.

Tell me who it was that warn'd me first
Of my son's dark designs? I listened then
To you, and not to him. I will have proof.
And for the future, mark me, Carlos stands
Nearer the throne — now duke — you may retire.
[*The* KING *retires into his cabinet.* *Exit* DUKE *by another door.*

SCENE IV.

CARLOS.

The Antechamber to the QUEEN'S *Apartments.* DON CARLOS *enters in conversation with a* PAGE. *The Attendants retire at his approach.*

For me this letter? And a key! How's this?
And both delivered with such mystery!
Come nearer, boy: — from whom didst thou receive them?

PAGE (*mysteriously*).

It seem'd to me the lady would be guess'd
Rather than be described.

CARLOS (*starting*).

The lady, what!
Who art thou, boy? [*Looking earnestly at the* PAGE.

PAGE.

A page that serves the queen.

CARLOS (*affrighted, putting his hand to the* PAGE'S *mouth*).

Hold, on your life! I know enough: no more.

[*He tears open the letter hastily, and retires to read it, meanwhile* DUKE ALVA *comes, and passing the prince, goes unperceived by him into the* QUEEN'S *apartment.* CARLOS *trembles violently, changes colour; when he has read the letter he remains a long time speechless, his eyes steadfastly fixed on it, at last he turns to the* PAGE.

She gave you this herself?

PAGE.

With her own hands.

CARLOS.

She gave this letter to you then herself?
Deceive me not: I ne'er have seen her writing,
And I must credit thee, if thou canst swear it;
But if thy tale be false, confess it straight,
Nor put this fraud on me.

PAGE.

This fraud, on whom?

CARLOS (*looking once more at the letter, then at the* PAGE *with doubt and earnestness*).

Your parents — are they living? and your father —
Serves he the king? — Is he a Spaniard born? —

PAGE.

He fell a colonel on St. Quentin's field,
Served in the cavalry of Savoy's duke —
His name Alonzo, Count of Henarez.

CARLOS (*taking his hand, and looking fixedly in his eyes*).

The king gave you this letter?

PAGE (*with emotion*).

Gracious prince,
Have I deserved these doubts?

CARLOS (*reading the letter*).

"This key unlocks
The back apartments in the queen's pavilion.
The furthest room lies next a cabinet,
Wherein no listener's foot dare penetrate;
Here may the voice of love without restraint
Confess those tender feelings, which till now
The heart with silent looks alone hath spoken.
The timid lover gains an audience here,
And sweet reward repays his secret sorrow."
[*As if awakening from a reverie.*
I am not in a dream, I do not rave,—
This is my right hand, this my sword — and these
Are written words. 'Tis true — it is no dream.
I am beloved, I feel I am beloved.
[*Unable to contain himself, he rushes hastily through the room, and raises his arms to heaven.*

PAGE.

Follow me, prince, and I will lead the way.

CARLOS.

Then let me first collect my scatter'd thoughts.
The alarm of joy still trembles in my bosom.
Did I e'er lift my fondest hopes so high,
Or trust my fancy to so bold a flight?
Show me the man can learn thus suddenly

To be a god. I am not what I was.
I feel another heaven — another sun
That was not here before. She loves — she loves me!

PAGE (*leading him forward*).

But this is not the place: prince! you forget.

CARLOS.

The king! My father!

[*His arms sink, he casts a timid look around, then collecting himself.*

This is dreadful! — Yes,
You're right, my friend. I thank you: I was not
Just then myself. To be compell'd to silence,
And bury in my heart this mighty bliss,
Is terrible!

[*Taking the* PAGE *by the hand, and leading him aside.*

Now hear! What thou hast seen,
And what not seen, must be within thy breast
Entomb'd as in the grave. So now depart;
I shall not need thy guidance; they must not
Surprise us here! Now go.

[*The* PAGE *is about to depart.*

Yet hold, a word!

[*The* PAGE *returns.* — CARLOS *lays his hand on his shoulder, and looks him steadily in the face.*

A direful secret hast thou in thy keeping,
Which, like a poison of terrific power,
Shivers the cup that holds it into atoms.
Guard every look of thine, nor let thy head
Guess at thy bosom's secret. Be thou like
The senseless speaking trumpet that receives
And echoes back the voice, but hears it not.
Thou art a boy! Be ever so — continue

The pranks of youth. My correspondent chose
Her messenger of love with prudent skill!
The king will ne'er suspect a serpent here.

PAGE.

And I, my prince, shall feel right proud to know
I am one secret richer than the king.

CARLOS.

Vain, foolish boy! — 'tis this should make thee tremble.
Approach me ever with a cold respect:
Ne'er be induced by idle pride to boast
How gracious is the prince! No deadlier sin
Canst thou commit, my son, than pleasing me.
Whate'er thou hast in future for my ear,
Give not to words — entrust not to thy lips,
Ne'er on that common highroad of the thoughts
Permit thy news to travel. — Speak with an eye,
A finger — I will answer with a look.
The very air, the light, are Philip's creatures,
And the deaf walls around are in his pay.
Some one approaches; fly, we'll meet again.

[*The* QUEEN'S *chamber opens, and* DUKE ALVA *comes out.*

PAGE.

Be careful, prince, to find the right apartment. [*Exit.*

CARLOS.

It is the duke! Fear not, I'll find the way.

Scene V.

Don Carlos, Duke of Alva.

ALVA (*meeting him*).

Two words, most gracious prince.

CARLOS.

Some other time. [*Going.*

ALVA.

The place is not the fittest, I confess;
Perhaps your Royal Highness may be pleased
To grant me audience in your private chamber.

CARLOS.

For what? And why not here? Only be brief.

ALVA.

The special object which has brought me hither
Is to return your Highness lowly thanks
For your good services.

CARLOS.

Thanks! thanks to me —
For what? Duke Alva's thanks!

ALVA.

You scarce had left
His Majesty, ere I received in form
Instructions to depart for Brussels.

CARLOS.

What!
For Brussels!

ALVA.

And to what, most gracious prince,
Must I ascribe this favour but to you —
Your intercession with the king?

CARLOS.

O, no!
Not in the least to me: — but, duke, you travel,
So Heav'n be with your Grace!

ALVA.

And is this all?
It seems, indeed, most strange! And has your Highness
No further orders, then, to send to Flanders?

CARLOS.

What should I have?

ALVA.

Not long ago, it seem'd,
That country's fate required your presence.

CARLOS.

How?
But yes, you're right, — it was so formerly;
But now this change is better as it is.

ALVA.

I am amazed —

CARLOS.

You are an able general,
No one doubts that — envy herself must own it.

For me, I'm but a youth — so thought the king.
The king was right, quite right. I see it now
Myself, and am content — and so no more.
God speed your journey; as you see, just now
My hands are full, and weighty business presses.
The rest to-morrow, or whene'er you will,
Or when you come from Brussels.

ALVA.

What is this?

CARLOS.

The season favours, and your route will lie
Through Milan, Lorraine, Burgundy, and on
To Germany! What, Germany? Ay, true,
In Germany it was — they know you there.
'Tis April now, May, June — in July, then,
Just so! or at the latest, soon in August, —
You will arrive in Brussels, and no doubt
We soon shall hear of your victorious deeds.
You know the way to win our high esteem,
And earn the crown of fame.

ALVA (*significantly*).

Indeed! condemn'd
By my own conscious insignificance!

CARLOS.

You're sensitive, my lord, and with some cause;
I own it was not fair to use a weapon
Against your Grace you were unskill'd to wield.

ALVA.

Unskill'd!

CARLOS.

'Tis pity I've no leisure now
To fight this worthy battle fairly out:
But at some other time, we —

ALVA.

Prince, we both
Miscalculate — but still in opposite ways.
You, for example, overrate your age
By twenty years, whilst on the other hand,
I, by as many, underrate it —

CARLOS.

Well!

ALVA.

And this suggests the thought, how many nights
Beside his lovely Lusitanian bride —
Your mother — would the king right gladly give
To buy an arm like this, to aid his crown.
Full well he knows, far easier is the task
To make a monarch than a monarchy;
Far easier, too, to stock the world with kings
Than frame an empire for a king to rule.

CARLOS.

Most true, Duke Alva, yet —

ALVA.

And how much blood,
Your subjects' dearest blood, must flow in streams
Before two drops could make a king of you.

CARLOS.

Most true, by Heaven! and in two words comprised,
All that the pride of merit has to urge
Against the pride of fortune. But the moral —
Now, Duke Alva!

ALVA.

Woe to the nursling babe
Of royalty, that mocks the careful hand
Which fosters it! How calmly it may sleep
On the soft cushion of our victories!
The monarch's crown is bright with sparkling gems,
But no eye sees the wounds that purchased them.
This sword has given our laws to distant realms,
Has blazed before the banner of the cross,
And in these quarters of the globe has traced
Ensanguin'd furrows for the seed of faith.
God was the judge in heaven, and I on earth.

CARLOS.

God, or the devil — it little matters which;
Yours was his chosen arm — that stands confess'd.
And now no more of this. Some thoughts there are
Whereof the memory pains me. I respect
My father's choice, — my father needs an Alva!
But that he needs him is not just the point
I envy in him: a great man you are,
This may be true, and I well-nigh believe it,
Only I fear your mission is begun
Some thousand years too soon. Alva, methinks,
Were just the man to suit the end of time.
Then when the giant insolence of vice
Shall have exhausted Heaven's enduring patience,
And the rich waving harvest of misdeeds
Stands in full ear, and asks a matchless reaper,
Then should you fill the post. O God! my Paradise!
My Flanders! But of this I must not think.

'Tis said you carry with you a full store
Of sentences of death already signed.
This shows a prudent foresight! No more need
To fear your foe's designs, or secret plots:
O, father! ill indeed I've understood thee,
Calling thee harsh, to save me from a post,
Where Alva's self alone can fitly shine!—
'Twas an unerring token of your love.

ALVA.

These words deserve —

CARLOS.

What!

ALVA.

But your birth protects you.

CARLOS (*seizing his sword*).

That calls for blood! Duke, draw your sword.

ALVA (*slightingly*).

On whom?

CARLOS (*pressing upon him*).

Draw, or I run you through.

ALVA.

Then be it so. [*They fight.*

Scene VI.

The Queen, Don Carlos, Duke Alva.

QUEEN (*coming from her room alarmed*).

How! naked swords?

[*To the* Prince *in an indignant and commanding tone.*

Prince Carlos!

CARLOS (*agitated at the* QUEEN'S *look, drops his arm, stands motionless, then runs to the* DUKE, *and embraces him*).

Pardon, duke!

Your pardon, sir! — Forget, forgive it all!

[*Throws himself in silence at the* Queen's *feet, then rising suddenly departs in confusion.*

ALVA.

By Heaven, 'tis strange!

QUEEN (*remains a few moments as if in doubt, then retiring to her Apartment*).

A word with you, Duke Alva.

[*Exit followed by the* Duke

Scene VII.

The Princess Eboli's *Apartment.*

The Princess *in a simple but elegant dress, playing on the lute. The* Queen's Page *enters.*

PRINCESS (*starting up suddenly*).

He comes!

PAGE (*abruptly*).

Are you alone? I wonder much
He is not here already; but he must
Be here upon the instant.

PRINCESS.

Do you say *must?*
Then he *will* come, this much is certain then.

PAGE.

He's close upon my steps. You are beloved,
Adored, and with more passionate regard
Than mortal ever was, or can be loved.
O! what a scene I witnessed!

PRINCESS (*impatiently draws him to her*).

Quick, you spoke
With him! What said he? Tell me straight —
How did he look? what were his words? And say —
Did he appear embarrass'd, or confused?
And did he guess who sent the key to him?
Be quick! — or did he not? He did not guess
At all, perhaps! or guess'd amiss! Come, speak,
How! not a word to answer me? Oh fie!
You never were so dull — so slow before,
'Tis past all patience.

PAGE.

Dearest lady, hear me!
Both key and note I placed within his hands,
In the queen's antechamber, and he started
And gazed with wonder when I told him that
A lady sent me!

PRINCESS.

Did he start? go on!
That's excellent. — Proceed, what next ensued?

PAGE.

I would have told him more, but he grew pale,
And snatch'd the letter from my hand, and said,
With look of deadly menace, he knew all.
He read the letter with confusion thro',
And straight began to tremble.

PRINCESS.

He knew all!
He knew it all? Were those his very words?

PAGE.

He ask'd me, and again he ask'd, if you
With your own hands had given me the letter?

PRINCESS.

If I? Then did he mention me by name?

PAGE.

By name! no name he mention'd: there might be
Listeners, he said about the palace, who
Might to the king disclose it.

PRINCESS (*surprised*).

Said he that?

PAGE.

He further said, it much concern'd the king;
Deeply concern'd — to know of that same letter.

PRINCESS.

The king! Nay, are you sure you heard him right?
The king! Was that the very word he used?

PAGE.

It was. He call'd it a most perilous secret,
And warn'd me to be strictly on my guard,
Never with word or look to give the king
Occasion for suspicion.

PRINCESS (*after a pause with astonishment*).

All agrees!
It can be nothing else — he must have heard
The tale — 'tis very strange! Who could have told him?
I wonder who? The eagle eye of Love
Alone could pierce so far. But tell me further —
He read the letter, —

PAGE.

Which, he said, convey'd
Such bliss as made him tremble, and till then
He had not dared to dream of. As he spoke,
The duke, by evil chance, approach'd the room,
And this compell'd us —

PRINCESS (*angrily*).

What in all the world
Could bring the duke to him at such a time?
What can detain him? Why appears he not?
See how you've been deceived; how truly blest
Might he have been already — in the time
You've taken to describe his wishes to me!

PAGE.

The duke, I fear —

PRINCESS.

Again, the duke! What can
The duke want here? What should a warrior want
With my soft dreams of happiness? He should
Have left him there, or sent him from his presence.

Where is the man may not be treated thus?
But Carlos seems as little versed in love
As in a woman's heart — he little knows
What minutes are. But hark! I hear a step;
Away, away. [PAGE *hastens out.*
Where have I laid my lute,
I must not seem to wait for him. My song
Shall be a signal to him.

SCENE VIII.

The PRINCESS, DON CARLOS.

The PRINCESS *has thrown herself upon an ottoman, and plays.*

CARLOS (*rushes in, he recognises the* PRINCESS, *and stands thunderstruck*).

Gracious Heav'n!
Where am I?

PRINCESS (*lets her lute fall, and meeting him*).

What! Prince Carlos! yes, in truth.

CARLOS.

Where am I? Senseless error, I have miss'd
The right apartment.

PRINCESS.

With what dexterous skill
Carlos contrives to hit the very room
Where ladies sit alone!

CARLOS.

Your pardon, princess!
I found — I found the antechamber open.

PRINCESS.

Can it be possible? I fastened it
Myself; at least I thought so —

CARLOS.

Ay! you thought,
You only thought so — rest assured you did not.
You meant to lock it, that I well believe:
But most assuredly it was not locked.
A lute's sweet sounds attracted me, some hand
Touch'd it with skill; say, was it not a lute?
[*Looking around inquiringly.*
Yes, there it lies, and Heaven can bear me witness
I love the lute to madness. I became
All ear, forgot myself in the sweet strain,
And rush'd into the chamber to behold
The lovely eyes of the divine musician,
Who charm'd me with the magic of her tones.

PRINCESS.

Innocent curiosity, no doubt!
But it was soon appeased — as I can prove —
[*After a short silence, significantly.*
I must respect the modesty, that has,
To spare a woman's blushes, thus involved
Itself in so much fiction.

CARLOS (*with sincerity*).

Nay, I feel
I but augment my deep embarrassment,
In vain attempt to extricate myself.
Excuse me from a part I cannot play
In this remote apartment; you perhaps
Have sought a refuge from the world — to pour
The inmost wishes of your secret heart

Remote from man's distracting eye. By me,
Unhappy that I am, your heavenly dreams
Are all disturb'd — and the atonement now
Must be my speedy absence. [*Going.*

PRINCESS (*surprised and confused, but immediately recovering herself*).

O! that step
Were cruel, prince, indeed!

CARLOS.

Princess, I feel
What such a look in such a place imports:
This virtuous embarrassment has claims
To which my manhood never can be deaf.
Woe to the wretch whose boldness takes new fire
From the pure blush of maiden modesty!
I am a coward when a woman trembles.

PRINCESS.

Is't possible? — Such noble self-control
In one so young, and he a monarch's son!
Now, prince, indeed you shall remain with me,
It is my own request, and you must stay.
Near such high virtue, every maiden fear
Takes wing at once; but your appearance here
Disturb'd me in a favourite air, and now
Your penalty shall be to hear me sing it.

CARLOS (*sits down near the* PRINCESS, *not without reluctance*).

A penalty delightful as the sin!
And sooth to say, the subject of the song
Was so divine, again and yet again
I'd gladly hear it.

PRINCESS.

What! you heard it all?
Nay, that was too bad, prince. It was, I think,
A song of love.

CARLOS.

And of successful love,
If I mistake not — dear delicious theme
From those most beauteous lips — but scarce so true,
Methinks, as beautiful.

PRINCESS.

What! not so true?
Then do you doubt the tale?

CARLOS.

I almost doubt
That Carlos and the Princess Eboli,
When they discourse on such a theme as love,
May not quite understand each other's hearts.
[*The* PRINCESS *starts; he observes it, and continues with playful gallantry.*
Who would believe those rosy-tinted cheeks
Conceal'd a heart torn by the pangs of love.
Is it within the range of wayward chance
That the fair Princess Eboli should sigh
Unheard — unanswer'd? Love is only known
By him who hopelessly persists in love.

PRINCESS (*with all her former vivacity*).

Hush! what a dreadful thought! this fate indeed
Appears to follow you of all mankind,
Especially to-day.
[*Taking his hand with insinuating interest.*
You are not happy,

Dear prince — you're sad! I know too well you suffer,
And wherefore, prince? When with such loud appeal
The world invites you to enjoy its bliss —
And nature on you pours her bounteous gifts,
And spreads around you all life's sweetest joys.
You, a great monarch's son, and more — far more —
E'en in your cradle with such gifts endow'd
As far eclipsed the splendour of your rank.
You, who in those strict courts where women rule,
And pass, without appeal, unerring sentence
On manly worth and honour, even there
Find partial judges. — You, who with a look
Can prove victorious, and whose very coldness
Kindles a flame; and who, when warm'd with passion,
Can make a Paradise, and scatter round
The bliss of heaven, the rapture of the gods.
The man whom nature has adorned with gifts
To render thousands happy, gifts which she
Bestows on few — that such a man as this
Should know what mis'ry is! — Thou, gracious Heaven,
That gav'st him all those blessings, why deny
Him eyes to see the conquests he has made?

CARLOS (*who has been lost in absence of mind, suddenly recovers himself by the silence of the* PRINCESS, *and starts up*).

Charming! inimitable! Princess, sing
That passage pray again.

PRINCESS (*looking at him with astonishment*).

Where, Carlos, were
Your thoughts the while?

CARLOS (*jumps up*).

By Heaven, you do remind me
In proper time — I must away — and quickly.

PRINCESS (*holding him back*).

Whither away?

CARLOS.

To the open air.
Nay, do not hold me, princess, for I feel
As tho' the world behind me were in flames.

PRINCESS (*holding him forcibly back*).

What troubles you? — Whence come these strange, these wild,
Unnatural looks? — Nay, answer me —
[CARLOS *stops to reflect, she draws him to the sofa to her.*
Dear Carlos,
You need repose, your blood is feverish.
Come sit by me: dispel these gloomy fancies.
Ask yourself frankly, can your head explain
The tumult of your heart — and if it can —
Say, can no knight be found in all the court,
No lady, generous as fair, to cure you —
Rather, I should have said, to understand you? —
What, no one?

CARLOS (*hastily, without thinking*).

If the Princess Eboli —

PRINCESS (*delighted, quickly*).

Indeed!

CARLOS.

Would write a letter for me, a few words
Of kindly intercession, to my father —
They say your influence is great.

PRINCESS.

Who says so?
Ha! was it jealousy that held thee mute! [*Aside.*

CARLOS.

Perchance my story is already public.
I had a sudden wish to visit Brabant,
Merely to win my spurs — no more. The king,
Kind soul, is fearful the fatigues of war
Might spoil my singing!

PRINCESS.

Prince, you play me false.
Confess that, by this serpent subterfuge,
You would mislead me. Look me in the face,
Deceitful one! and say, would he whose thoughts
Were only bent on warlike deeds — would he
E'er stoop so low as, with deceitful hand,
To steal fair ladies' ribbons, when they drop,
And then — your pardon! — hoard them with such care?

[*With light action she opens his shirt frill, and seizes a ribbon which is there concealed.*

CARLOS (*drawing back with amazement*).

Nay, princess — that's too much — I am betray'd. —
You're not to be deceived. — You are in league
With spirits and with demons!

PRINCESS.

Are you then
Surprised at this? What will you wager, Carlos,
But I recall some stories to your heart?
Nay, try it with me; ask whate'er you please.
And if the triflings of thy sportive fancy —

The sound half-uttered, by the air absorb'd —
The smile of joy check'd by returning gloom —
If motions — looks from your own soul conceal'd,
Have not escaped my notice — judge if I
Can err, when thou wouldst have me understand thee?

CARLOS.

Why this is boldly ventured: I accept
The wager, princess. Then you undertake
To make discoveries in my secret heart,
Unknown e'en to myself.

PRINCESS (*displeased, but earnestly*).

Unknown to thee!
Reflect a moment, prince! Nay, look around;
This boudoir's not the chamber of the queen,
Where small deceits are practised with full license.
You start, a sudden blush o'erspreads your face.
Who is so bold, so idle, you would ask,
As to watch Carlos, when he deems himself
From scrutiny secure? Who was it, then,
At the last palace ball, observed you leave
The queen, your partner, standing in the dance,
And join, with eager haste, the neighb'ring couple,
To offer to the Princess Eboli
The hand your royal partner should have claim'd?
An error, prince, his Majesty himself,
Who just then entered the apartment, noticed.

CARLOS (*with ironical smile*).

His Majesty? And did he really so?
Of all men he should not have seen it!

PRINCESS.

No;
Nor yet that other scene, within the chapel,

Which doubtless Carlos hath long since forgotten.
Prostrate before the holy Virgin's image,
You lay in prayer, when suddenly you heard —
'Twas not your fault — a rustling from behind
Of ladies' dresses. Then did Philip's son,
A youth of hero courage, tremble like
A heretic before the Holy Office.
On his pale lips died the half-utter'd prayer.
In ecstasy of passion, prince — the scene
Was truly touching — for you seized the hand,
The blessed Virgin's cold and holy hand,
And shower'd your burning kisses on the marble.

CARLOS.

Princess, you wrong me: that was pure devotion!

PRINCESS.

Indeed! that's quite another thing. Perhaps
It was the fear of losing, then, at cards,
When you were seated with the queen and me,
And you with dexterous skill purloined my glove,
[CARLOS *starts surprised.*
That prompted you to play it for a card?

CARLOS.

What words are these? O Heav'n, what have I done?

PRINCESS.

Nothing, I hope, of which you need repent!
How pleasantly was I surprised to find
Conceal'd within the glove a little note,
Full of the warmest, tenderest romance.

CARLOS (*interrupting her suddenly*).

Mere poetry! — no more. My fancy teems
With idle bubbles oft, which break as soon
As they arise — and this was one of them;
So prithee let us talk of it no more.

PRINCESS (*leaving him with astonishment, and regarding him for some time at a distance*).

I am exhausted — all attempts are vain
To hold this youth. He still eludes my grasp.
[*Remains silent a few moments.*
But stay! Perchance 'tis man's unbounded pride,
That thus to add a zest to my delight
Assumes a mask of timid diffidence.
'Tis so.
[*She approaches the* PRINCE *again, and looks at him doubtingly.*
Explain yourself, prince, I entreat you.
For here I stand before a magic casket,
Which all my keys are powerless to unlock.

CARLOS.

As I before you stand.

PRINCESS (*leaves him suddenly, walks a few steps up and down in silence, apparently lost in deep thought. — After a pause, gravely and solemnly*).

Then thus at last —
I must resolve to speak, and Carlos, you
Shall be my judge. Yours is a noble nature,
You are a prince — a knight — a man of honour.
I throw myself upon your heart — protect me:
Or if I'm lost beyond redemption's power,
Give me your tears in pity for my fate.
[*The* PRINCE *draws nearer.*
A daring favourite of the king demands

My hand — his name Ruy Gomez, Count of Silva.
The king consents — the bargain has been struck,
And I am sold already to this creature.

CARLOS (*with evident emotion*).

Sold! you sold! Another bargain, then,
Concluded by this royal southern trader!

PRINCESS.

No: but hear all — 'tis not enough that I
Am sacrificed to cold state policy,
A snare is laid to entrap my innocence.
Here is a letter will unmask the saint!
[CARLOS *takes the paper, and without reading it listens with impatience to her recital.*
Where shall I find protection, prince? Till now
My virtue was defended by my pride.
At length —

CARLOS.

At length you yielded. — Yielded? No,
For God's sake say not so!

PRINCESS.

Yielded! — to whom?
Poor piteous reasoning — Weak beyond contempt
Your haughty minds, who hold a woman's favour,
And love's pure joys, as wares to traffic for!
Love is the only treasure on the face
Of this wide earth, that knows no purchaser
Besides itself — love has no price but love.
It is the costly gem, beyond all price,
Which I must freely give away, or — bury
For ever unenjoyed — like that proud merchant
Whom not the wealth of all the rich Rialto
Could tempt — a great rebuke to kings! — to save

From the deep ocean waves his matchless pearl,
Too proud to barter it beneath its worth!

CARLOS (*aside*).

Now, by great Heaven, this woman's beautiful.

PRINCESS.

Call it caprice or pride, I ne'er will make
Division of my joys. To him, alone,
I choose as mine, I give up all for ever.
One only sacrifice I make; but that
Shall be eternal. One true heart alone
My love shall render happy; but that one
I'll elevate to God. The keen delight
Of mingling souls — the kiss — the swimming joys
Of that delicious hour when lovers meet,
The magic power of heavenly beauty — all
Are sister colours of a single ray —
Leaves of one single blossom. Shall I tear
One petal from this sweet, this lovely flower,
With reckless hand, and mar its beauteous chalice?
Shall I degrade the dignity of woman,
The masterpiece of the Almighty's hand,
To charm the evening of a reveller?

CARLOS.

Incredible! that in Madrid should dwell
This matchless creature! and unknown to me
Until this day.

PRINCESS.

Long since had I forsaken
This court — the world — and in some blest retreat
Immured myself; but one tie binds me still
Too firmly to existence. Perhaps — alas!
'Tis but a phantom — but 'tis dear to me.
I love — but am not loved in turn —

CARLOS (*full of ardour going toward her*).

You are!
As true as God is throned in heaven! I swear
You are — you are unspeakably beloved —

PRINCESS.

You swear it, you! — sure 'twas an angel's voice.
O, if you swear it, Carlos, I'll believe it —
Then I am truly loved!

CARLOS (*embracing her with tenderness*).

Bewitching maid,
Thou creature worthy of idolatry!
I stand before thee now all eye, all ear,
All rapture and delight. What eye hath seen thee —
Under yon heaven what eye could e'er have seen thee,
And boast he never loved? What dost thou here
In Philip's royal court! Thou beauteous angel!
Here amid monks and all their priestly train.
This is no clime for such a lovely flower —
They fain would rifle all thy sweets — full well
I know their hearts. But it shall never be —
Not whilst I draw life's breath — I fold thee thus
Within my arms, and in these hands I'll bear thee
E'en through a hell replete with mocking fiends.
Let me thy guardian angel prove.

PRINCESS (*with a countenance full of love*).

Oh, Carlos!
How little have I known thee! and how richly
With measureless reward thy heart repays
The weighty task of — comprehending thee!
[*She takes his hand and is about to kiss it.*

CARLOS (*drawing it back*).

Princess! What mean you?

PRINCESS (*with tenderness and grace, looking at his hand attentively*).

O, this beauteous hand!
How lovely 'tis, and rich! This hand has yet
Two costly presents to bestow! — a crown —
And Carlos' heart: — and both these gifts perchance
Upon one mortal! — both on one — O great
And godlike gift — almost too much for one!
How if you share the treasure, prince! A queen
Knows nought of love — and she who truly loves
Cares little for a crown! 'Twere better, prince,
Then to divide the treasure — and at once —
What says my prince? Have you done so already?
Have you in truth? And do I know the blest one?

CARLOS.

Thou shalt. I will unfold myself to thee,
To thy unspotted innocence, dear maid,
Thy pure unblemish'd nature. In this court
Thou art the worthiest — first — the only one
To whom this soul has stood reveal'd. Then, yes!
I will not now conceal it — Yes, I love! —

PRINCESS.

O cruel heart! Does this avowal prove
So painful to thee? Must I first deserve
Thy pity — ere I hope to win thy love?

CARLOS (*starting*).

What say'st thou?

PRINCESS.

So to trifle with me, prince!
Indeed it was not well — and to deny
The key!

CARLOS.

The key! the key! Oh yes, 'tis so!
[*After a dead silence.*
I see it all too plainly! Gracious Heav'n!
[*His knees totter, he leans against a chair, and covers his face with his hands. A long silence on both sides. The* PRINCESS *screams and falls.*

PRINCESS.

Oh horrible! What have I done?

CARLOS.

Hurl'd down
So far from all my heavenly joys! 'Tis dreadful!

PRINCESS (*hiding her face in the cushion*).

O God! What have I said?

CARLOS (*kneeling before her*).

I am not guilty.
My passion — an unfortunate mistake —
By heaven, I am not guilty —

PRINCESS (*pushing him from her*).

Out of my sight,
For Heav'n's sake!

CARLOS.

No, I will not leave thee thus.
In this dread anguish leave thee —

PRINCESS (*pushing him forcibly away*).

O in pity —
For mercy's sake, away — out of my sight!
Wouldst thou destroy me? How I hate thy presence!
[CARLOS *going.*
Give, give me back the letter and the key. —
Where is the other letter?

CARLOS.

The other letter?
What other?

PRINCESS.

That from the king, to me —

CARLOS (*terrified*).

From whom?

PRINCESS.

The one I just now gave you.

CARLOS.

From the king!
To you!

PRINCESS.

O heavens, how dreadfully have I
Involved myself! The letter, sir! I must
Have it again.

CARLOS.

The letter from the king!
To you!

PRINCESS.

The letter! give it, I implore you
By all that's sacred — give it —

CARLOS.

What, the letter
That will unmask the saint! — Is this the letter?

PRINCESS.

Now I'm undone! Quick, give it me —

CARLOS.

The letter —

PRINCESS (*wringing her hands in despair*).

What have I done? — O dreadful, dire imprudence!

CARLOS.

This letter comes then from the king! Princess,
That changes all indeed, and quickly too.
This letter is beyond all value — priceless!
All Philip's crowns are worthless and too poor
To win it from my hands. I'll keep this letter.

PRINCESS (*throwing herself prostrate before him as he is going*).

Almighty Heaven! then I am lost for ever!

[*Exit* CARLOS.

SCENE IX.

The PRINCESS *alone.*

(*She seems overcome with surprise and is confounded. After* CARLOS'S *departure she hastens to call him back.*)

PRINCESS.

Prince, but one word! Prince, hear me. He is gone.
And this, too, I am doom'd to bear — his scorn!

And I am left in lonely wretchedness,
Rejected and despised!
[*Sinks down upon a chair. — After a pause.*
And yet not so —
I'm but displaced — supplanted by some wanton.
He loves! of that, no longer doubt is left:
He has himself confess'd it — but my rival —
Who can she be? Happy, thrice happy one!
This much stands clear — he loves, where he should not!
He dreads discovery — and from the king
He hides his guilty passion! Why from him
Who would so gladly hail it? Or, is it not
The father that he dreads so in the parent? —
When the king's wanton purpose was disclosed
His features glow'd with triumph — boundless joy
Flash'd in his eyes — his rigid virtue fled —
Why was it mute in such a cause as this?
Why should he triumph? What hath he to gain
If Philip to his queen —
[*She stops suddenly, as if struck by a thought, then drawing the ribbon hastily from her bosom which she had taken from* CARLOS, *she seems to recognise it.*
Fool that I am! —
At length 'tis plain. Where have my senses been?
My eyes are opened now. They loved each other
Long before Philip wooed her, and the prince
Ne'er saw me but with her! She, she alone
Was in his thoughts when I believed myself
The object of his true and boundless love.
O matchless error! — and have I betray'd
My weakness to her? [*Pauses.*
Should his love prove hopeless?
Who can believe it? Would a hopeless love
Persist in such a struggle? Call'd to revel
In joys for which a monarch sighs in vain!

A hopeless love makes no such sacrifice.
What fire was in his kiss! How tenderly
He press'd my bosom to his beating heart!
Well nigh the trial had proved dangerous
To his romantic, unrequited passion!
With joy he seized the key he fondly thought
The queen had sent: — in this gigantic stride
Of love he puts full credence — and he comes —
In very truth comes here — and so imputes
To Philip's wife a deed so madly rash.
And would he so, had love not made him bold?
'Tis clear as day — his suit is heard — she loves!
By Heaven, this saintly creature burns with passion.
How subtle too she is! With fear I trembled
Before this lofty paragon of virtue!
She tower'd beside me, an exalted being,
And in her beams I felt myself eclipsed;
I envied her the lovely, cloudless calm
That kept her soul from earthly tumults free.
And was this soft serenity but show?
Would she at both feasts revel, holding up
Her virtue's godlike splendour to our gaze,
And riot in the secret joys of vice?
And shall the false dissembler cozen thus,
And win a safe immunity from this —
That no avenger comes? By Heaven she shall not!
I once adored her, — that demands revenge: —
The king shall know her treachery — the king!
[*After a pause.*
'Tis the sure way to win the monarch's ear! [*Exit.*

Scene X.

A Chamber in the Royal Palace.

Duke of Alva, Father Domingo.

DOMINGO.

Something to tell me?

ALVA.

Ay! a thing of moment,
Of which I've made discovery to-day,
And I would have your judgment on it.

DOMINGO.

How!
Discovery! To what do you allude?

ALVA.

Prince Carlos and myself this morning met
In the queen's antechamber. I received
An insult from him — we were both in heat —
The strife grew loud — and we had drawn our swords.
Alarm'd from her apartment rush'd the queen.
She stepped between us, — with commanding eye
Of conscious power, she looked upon the prince.
'Twas but a single glance, — but his arm dropp'd,
He fell upon my bosom — gave me then
A warm embrace, and vanish'd.

DOMINGO (*after a pause*).

This seems strange.
It brings a something to my mind, my lord!
And thoughts like these I own have often sprung
Within my breast; but I avoid such fancies —

To no one have I e'er confided them.
There are such things as double-edged swords
And untrue friends: — I fear them both. 'Tis hard
To judge among mankind, but still more hard
To know them thoroughly. Words slipt at random
Are confidants offended — therefore I
Buried my secret in my breast, till time
Should drag it forth to light. 'Tis dangerous
To render certain services to kings.
They are the bolts, which, if they miss the mark,
Recoil upon the archer! I could swear
Upon the sacrament to what I saw.
Yet one eye-witness — one word overheard —
A scrap of paper — would weigh heavier far
Than my most strong conviction! Cursed fate
That we are here in Spain!

ALVA.

And why in Spain?

DOMINGO.

There is a chance in every court but this,
For passion to forget itself, and fall.
Here it is warn'd by ever-wakeful laws.
Our Spanish queens would find it hard to sin —
And *only there* do they meet obstacles,
Where best 'twould serve our purpose to surprise them.

ALVA.

But listen, father: Carlos had to-day
An audience of the king; the interview
Lasted an hour, and earnestly he sought
The government of Flanders for himself.
Loudly he begg'd, and fervently. I heard him
In the adjoining cabinet. His eyes
Were red with tears when I encountered him;

At noon he wore a look of lofty triumph,
And vow'd his joy at the king's choice of me.
He thank'd the king. "Matters are changed," he said,
"And things go better now." He's no dissembler:
How shall I reconcile such contradictions?
The prince exults to see himself rejected,
And I receive a favour from the king
With marks of anger! — What must I believe?
In truth, this new-born dignity doth sound
Much more like banishment, than royal favour!

DOMINGO.

And is it come to this at last? to this?
And has one moment crumbled into dust
What cost us years to build? And you so calm,
So perfectly at ease! — Know you this youth?
Do you foresee the fate we may expect
Should he attain to power? The prince! No foe
Am I of his. Far other cares than these
Gnaw at my rest — cares for the throne — for God,
And for his holy Church! — The royal prince —
(I know him, I can penetrate his soul) —
Has formed a horrible design, Toledo!
The wild design — to make himself the regent,
And set aside our pure and sacred faith.
His bosom glows with some new-fangled virtue,
Which, proud and self-sufficient, scorns to rest
For strength on any creed. He dares to *think!*
His brain is all on fire with wild chimeras —
He reverences the people! And is this
A man to be our king?

ALVA.

Fantastic dreams!
No more. A boy's ambition, too, perchance
To play some lofty part! What can he less?
These thoughts will vanish when he's call'd to rule.

DOMINGO.

I doubt it! Of his freedom he is proud,
And scorns those strict restraints all men must bear
Who hope to govern others. Would he suit
Our throne? His bold gigantic mind
Would burst the barriers of our policy.
In vain I sought to enervate his soul
In the loose joys of this voluptuous age,
He stood the trial. Fearful is the spirit
That rules this youth; and Philip soon will see
His sixtieth year.

ALVA.

Your vision stretches far!

DOMINGO.

He and the queen are both alike in this.
Already works, conceal'd in either breast,
The poisonous wish for change and innovation.
Give it but way, 'twill quickly reach the throne.
I know this Valois! We may tremble for
The secret vengeance of this quiet foe,
If Philip's weakness hearken to her voice!
Fortune so far hath smiled upon us. Now
We must anticipate the foe — and both
Shall fall together in one fatal snare.
Let but a hint of such a thing be dropp'd
Before the king, proved or unproved, it recks not;
Our point is gain'd if he but waver. We
Ourselves have not a doubt; and once convinced,
'Tis easy to convince another's mind.
Be sure we shall discover more, if we
Start with the faith that more remains conceal'd.

ALVA.

But soft! A vital question. Who is he
Will undertake the task to tell the king?

DOMINGO.

Nor you, nor I! Now shall you learn, what long
My busy spirit, full of its design,
Has been at work with, to achieve its ends.
Still is there wanting, to complete our league,
A third important personage. The king
Loves the young Princess Eboli — and I
Foster this passion, for my own designs.
I am his go-between. She shall be school'd
Into our plot. If my plan fail me not,
In this young lady, shall a close ally —
A very queen, bloom for us. She herself
Asked me, but now, to meet her in this chamber.
I'm full of hope. And in one little night
A Spanish maid may blast this Valois' lily.

ALVA.

What do you say! Can I have heard aright?
By Heaven! I'm all amazement. Compass this,
And I'll bow down to thee, Dominican!
The day's our own.

DOMINGO.

Soft! Some one comes: 'tis she —
'Tis she herself!

ALVA.

I'm in the adjoining room
If you should —

DOMINGO.

Be it so: I'll call you in. [*Exit* ALVA.

Scene XI.

Princess, Domingo.

DOMINGO.

At your command, princess.

PRINCESS.

We are perhaps
Not quite alone? [*Looking inquisitively after the* Duke.
You have, as I observe,
A witness still by you.

DOMINGO.

How?

PRINCESS.

Who was he
That left your side but now?

DOMINGO.

It was Duke Alva,
Most gracious princess, he requests you will
Admit him to an audience after me.

PRINCESS.

Duke Alva! How! What can he want with me?
You can, perhaps, inform me?

DOMINGO.

I? — and that
Before I learn to what important chance
I owe the favour, long denied, to stand

Before the Princess Eboli once more?
[*Pauses awaiting her answer.*
Has any circumstance occurr'd at last
To favour the king's wishes? Have my hopes
Been not in vain, that more deliberate thought
Would reconcile you to an offer which
Caprice alone and waywardness could spurn?
I seek your presence full of expectation —

PRINCESS.

Was my last answer to the king convey'd?

DOMINGO.

I have delay'd to inflict this mortal wound.
There still is time, it rests with you, princess,
To mitigate its rigour.

PRINCESS.

Tell the king
That I expect him.

DOMINGO.

May I, lovely princess,
Indeed accept this as your true reply?

PRINCESS.

I do not jest. — By Heaven, you make me tremble!
What have I done to make e'en you grow pale?

DOMINGO.

Nay, lady, this surprise — so sudden — I
Can scarcely comprehend it.

PRINCESS.

Reverend sir!
You shall not comprehend it. Not for all

The world would I you comprehended it.
Enough for you it is so — spare yourself
The trouble to investigate in thought,
Whose eloquence hath wrought this wondrous change.
But for your comfort let me add, you have
No hand in this misdeed, — nor has the Church.
Although you've proved that cases might arise
Wherein the Church, to gain some noble end,
Might use the persons of her youthful daughters!
Such reasonings move not me: such motives, pure,
Right reverend sir, are far too high for me.

DOMINGO.

When they become superfluous, your Grace,
I willingly retract them.

PRINCESS.

Seek the king,
And ask him, as from me, that he will not
Mistake me in this business. What I have been,
That am I still. 'Tis but the course of things
Has changed. When I in anger spurn'd his suit,
I deem'd him truly happy in possessing
Earth's fairest queen. I thought his faithful wife
Deserved my sacrifice. I thought so then,
But now I'm undeceived.

DOMINGO.

Princess, go on!
I hear it all — we understand each other.

PRINCESS.

Enough. She is found out. I will not spare her.
The hypocrite's unmask'd! She has deceived
The king, all Spain, and me. She loves, I know

She loves! I can bring proofs will make you tremble.
The king has been deceived — but he shall not,
By Heaven, go unrevenged! The saintly mask
Of pure and superhuman self-denial
I'll tear from her deceitful brow, that all
May see the forehead of the shameless sinner.
'Twill cost me dear, but here my triumph lies,
That it will cost her infinitely more.

DOMINGO.

Now all is ripe, let me call in the duke. [*Goes out.*

PRINCESS (*astonished*).

What means all this?

Scene XII.

The Princess, Duke Alva, Domingo.

DOMINGO (*leading the* DUKE *in*).

Our tidings, good my lord,
Come somewhat late. The Princess Eboli
Reveals to us a secret we had meant
Ourselves to impart to her.

ALVA.

My visit, then,
Will not so much surprise her, but I never
Trust my own eyes in these discoveries.
They need a woman's more discerning glance.

PRINCESS.

Discoveries! How mean you?

DOMINGO.

Would we knew
What place and fitter season you —

PRINCESS.

Just so!
To-morrow noon, I will expect you both.
Reasons I have, why this clandestine guilt
Should from the king no longer be conceal'd.

ALVA.

'Tis this that brings us here. The king must know it.
And he should hear the news from you, princess,
From you alone: — for to what tongue would he
Afford such ready credence, as to yours,
Friend and companion ever of his spouse?

DOMINGO.

As yours, who more than any one, at will
Can o'er him exercise supreme command.

ALVA.

I am the prince's open enemy.

DOMINGO.

And that is what the world believes of me.
The Princess Eboli's above suspicion;
We are compell'd to silence, but your duty,
The duty of your office, calls on you
To speak. The king shall not escape our hands;
Let your hints rouse him, we'll complete the work.

ALVA.

It must be done at once, without delay;
Each moment now is precious. In an hour
The order may arrive for my departure.

DOMINGO (*after a short pause, turns to the* PRINCESS).

Cannot some letters be discover'd? Truly,
An intercepted letter from the prince
Would work with rare effect. Ay! let me see —
Is it not so? You sleep, princess, I think,
In the same chamber with her Majesty?

PRINCESS.

The next to hers. But of what use is that?

DOMINGO.

Oh for some skill in locks! Have you observed
Where she is wont to keep her casket key?

PRINCESS (*in thought*).

Yes! that might lead to something — yes, I think
The key is to be found.

DOMINGO.

Letters, you know,
Need messengers. Her retinue is large —
Who do you think could put us on the scent?
Gold can do much.

ALVA.

Can no one tell us whether
The prince has any trusty confidant?

DOMINGO.

Not one; in all Madrid not one.

ALVA.

That's strange!

DOMINGO.

Rely on me in this. He holds in scorn
The universal court. I have my proofs.

ALVA.

Stay! It occurs to me — as I was leaving
The queen's apartment, I beheld the prince
In private conference with a page of hers.

PRINCESS (*suddenly interrupting*).

Oh no! that must have been of something else.

DOMINGO.

Could we not ascertain the fact? It seems
Suspicious. [*To the* DUKE.
Did you know the page, my lord?

PRINCESS.

Some trifle — what else could it be? Enough —
I'm sure of that. So we shall meet again
Before I see the king; and by that time
We may discover much.

DOMINGO (*leading her aside*).

What of the king?
Say, may he hope? May I assure him so?
And the entrancing hour which shall fulfil
His fond desires, what shall I say of that?

PRINCESS.

In a few days I will feign sickness, and
Shall be excused from waiting on the queen;
Such is, you know, the custom of the court,
And I may then remain in my apartment.

DOMINGO.

'Tis well devised! Now the great game is won,
And we may bid defiance to all queens!

PRINCESS.

Hark, I am called. I must attend the queen.
So fare you well. [*Exit.*

Scene XIII.

ALVA *and* DOMINGO.

DOMINGO (*after a pause, during which he has watched the* PRINCESS).

ALVA.

My lord! these roses, and —
Your battles —

And your God — why even so!
Thus we'll await the lightning that shall scathe us!
[*Exeunt.*

Scene XIV.

A Carthusian Convent.

DON CARLOS *and the* PRIOR.

CARLOS (*to the* PRIOR *as he comes in*).

Been here already? — I am sorry for it.

PRIOR.

Yes, thrice since morning. 'Tis about an hour
Since he went hence.

CARLOS.

But he will sure return.
Has he not left some message?

PRIOR.

Yes; he promised
To come again at noon.

CARLOS (*going to a window and looking around the country*).

Your convent lies
Far from the public road. Yonder are seen
The turrets of Madrid — just so — and there
The Mansanares flows. The scenery is
Exactly to my wish, and all around
Is calm and still as secrecy itself.

PRIOR.

Or as the entrance to another world!

CARLOS.

Most worthy sir, to your fidelity
And honour have I now entrusted all
I hold most dear and sacred in the world.
No mortal man must know, or e'en suspect,
With whom I here hold secret assignation.
Most weighty reasons prompt me to deny,
To all the world, the friend whom I expect,
Therefore I choose this convent. — Are we safe
From traitors and surprise? You recollect
What you have sworn.

PRIOR.

Good sir, rely on us.
A king's suspicion cannot pierce the grave,

And curious ears haunt only those resorts
Where wealth and passions dwell — but from these walls
The world's for ever banish'd.

CARLOS.

You may think,
Perhaps, beneath this seeming fear and caution
There lies a guilty conscience?

PRIOR.

I think nothing.

CARLOS.

If you imagine this, most holy father,
You err — indeed you err. My secret shuns
The sight of man — but not the eye of God.

PRIOR.

Such things concern us little. This retreat
To guilt and innocence alike is open.
And whether thy designs be good or ill,
Thy purpose criminal or virtuous, — that
We leave to thee to settle with thy heart.

CARLOS (*with warmth*).

Our purpose never can disgrace your God.
'Tis his own noblest work. To you indeed,
I may reveal it.

PRIOR.

To what end, I pray?
Forego, dear prince, this needless explanation.
The world and all its troubles have been long
Shut from my thoughts — in preparation for
My last long journey. Why recall them to me

For the brief space that must precede my death?
'Tis little for salvation that we need —
But the bell rings, and summons me to prayer.
[*Exit* PRIOR.

SCENE XV.

DON CARLOS; *the* MARQUIS POSA *enters.*

CARLOS.

At length once more, — at length —

MARQUIS.

O, what a trial
For the impatience of a friend! The sun
Has risen twice — twice set — since Carlos' fate
Has been resolved, and am I only now
To learn it: speak, — you're reconciled! —

CARLOS.

With whom?

MARQUIS.

The king! And Flanders, too, — its fate is settled!

CARLOS.

The duke sets out to-morrow. That is fixed —

MARQUIS.

That cannot be — it is not surely so.
Can all Madrid be so deceived? 'Tis said
You had a private audience, and the king —

CARLOS.

Remain'd inflexible, and we are now
Divided more than ever.

MARQUIS.

Do you go
To Flanders?

CARLOS.

No!

MARQUIS.

Alas! my blighted hopes!

CARLOS.

Of this hereafter. Oh, Roderigo! since
We parted last, what have I not endured?
But first thy counsel! I must speak with her!

MARQUIS.

Your mother? No! But wherefore?

CARLOS.

I have hopes —
But you turn pale! Be calm — I should be happy.
And I shall be so: but of this anon —
Advise me now, how I may speak with her.

MARQUIS.

What mean you? What new feverish dream is this?

CARLOS.

By the great God of wonders 'tis no dream!
'Tis truth, reality —
[*Taking out the* KING'S *letter to the* PRINCESS EBOLI.
Contain'd in this
Important paper — Yes, the queen is free,
Free before men and in the eyes of Heaven;
There read, and cease to wonder at my words.

MARQUIS (*opening the letter*).

What do I here behold? The king's own hand!
[*After he has read it.*
To whom address'd?

CARLOS.

To Princess Eboli.
Two days ago, a page who serves the queen
Brought me, from unknown hands, a key and letter,
Which said that in the left wing of the palace,
Where the queen lodges, lay a cabinet, —
That there a lady whom I long had loved
Awaited me. I straight obey'd the summons.

MARQUIS.

Fool! madman! you obey'd it —

CARLOS.

Not that I
The writing knew; but there was only one
Such woman, who could think herself adored
By Carlos. With delight intoxicate
I hastened to the spot. A heavenly song,
Reëchoing from the innermost apartment,
Served me for guide. I reached the cabinet —
I entered and beheld — conceive my wonder!

MARQUIS.

I guess it all—

CARLOS.

I had been lost for ever,
But that I fell into an angel's hands!
She, hapless chance, by my imprudent looks
Deceived, had yielded to the sweet delusion,
And deem'd herself the idol of my soul.
Moved by the silent anguish of my breast,

With thoughtless generosity, her heart
Nobly determined to return my love;
Deeming respectful fear had caused my silence,
She dared to speak, and all her lovely soul
Laid bare before me.

MARQUIS.

And with calm composure,
You tell this tale! The Princess Eboli
Saw through your heart; and doubtless she has pierced
The inmost secret of your hidden love.
You've wrong'd her deeply, and she rules the king.

CARLOS (*confidently*).

But she is virtuous!

MARQUIS.

She may be so
From love's mere selfishness. But much I fear
Such virtue — well I know it: know how little
It hath the power to soar to that *ideal*,
Which, first conceived in sweet and stately grace,
From the pure soul's maternal soil, puts forth
Spontaneous shoots, nor asks the gard'ner's aid
To nurse its lavish blossoms into life.
'Tis but a foreign plant, with labour rear'd,
And warmth that poorly imitates the south,
In a cold soil and an unfriendly clime.
Call it what name you will — or education,
Or principle, or artificial virtue —
Won from the heat of youth by art and cunning,
In conflicts manifold — all noted down
With scrupulous reckoning to that Heaven's account,
Which is its aim, and will requite its pains.
Ask your own heart! Can she forgive the queen
That you should scorn her dearly purchased virtue,
To pine in hopeless love for Philip's wife?

CARLOS.

Know'st thou the princess, then, so well?

MARQUIS.

Not I —
I've scarcely seen her twice. And yet thus much
I may remark. To me she still appears
To shun alone the nakedness of vice,
Too weakly proud of her imagined virtue.
And then I mark the queen! How different, Carlos,
Is everything that I behold in her!
In native dignity, serene and calm,
Wearing a careless cheerfulness — unschool'd
In all the train'd restraints of conduct, far
Removed from boldness and timidity,
With firm heroic step she walks along
The narrow middle path of rectitude,
Unconscious of the worship she compels,
Where she of self-approval never dream'd.
Say, does my Carlos in this mirror trace
The features of his Eboli? The princess
Was constant while she loved; love was the price,
The understood condition of her virtue.
You fail'd to pay that price — 'twill therefore fall.

CARLOS (*with warmth*).

No, no! [*Hastily pacing the Apartment.*
I tell thee, no! And Roderigo,
Ill it becomes thee, thus to rob thy Carlos
Of his high trust in human excellence,
His chief, his dearest joy!

MARQUIS.

Deserve I this?
Friend of my soul, this would I never do —
By Heaven I would not! O this Eboli!

She were an angel to me, and before
Her glory would I bend me prostrate down,
In reverence deep as thine, if she were not
The mistress of thy secret.

CARLOS.

See how vain,
How idle are thy fears! What proofs has she
That will not stamp her maiden brow with shame?
Say, will she purchase with her own dishonour
The wretched satisfaction of revenge?

MARQUIS.

Ay! to recall a blush, full many a one
Has doom'd herself to infamy.

CARLOS (*with increased vehemence*).

Nay, that
Is far too harsh — and cruel! She is proud
And noble; well I know her, and fear nothing.
Vain are your efforts to alarm my hopes.
I must speak to my mother.

MARQUIS.

Now? for what?

CARLOS.

Because I've nothing more to care for now,
And I must know my fate. Only contrive
That I may speak with her.

MARQUIS.

And wilt thou show
This letter to her?

CARLOS.

Question me no more,
But quickly find the means that I may see her.

MARQUIS (*significantly*).

Didst thou not tell me that thou lov'st thy mother?
And wouldst thou really show this letter to her?
[CARLOS *fixes his eyes on the ground and remains silent.*
I read a something, Carlos, in thy looks
Unknown to me before. Thou turn'st thine eyes
Away from me. — Then is it true, and have I
Judged thee aright? Here, let me see that paper.
[CARLOS *gives him the letter, and the* MARQUIS *tears it.*

CARLOS.

What! art thou mad? [*Moderating his warmth.*
In truth, — I must confess it, —
That letter was of deepest moment to me.

MARQUIS.

So it appear'd: on that account I tore it.
[*The* MARQUIS *casts a penetrating look on the* PRINCE, *who surveys him with doubt and surprise. — A long silence.*
Now speak to me with candour, Carlos. What
Have desecrations of the royal bed
To do with thee — thy love? Dost thou fear Philip?
How are a husband's violated duties
Allied with thee and thy audacious hopes!
Has he sinn'd there, where thou hast placed thy love?
Now then, in truth, I learn to comprehend thee —
How ill till now I've understood thy love!

CARLOS.

What dost thou think, Roderigo?

MARQUIS.

Oh, I feel
From what it is that I must wean myself.
Once it was otherwise! — Yes, once thy soul
Was bounteous, rich, and warm, and there was room
For a whole world in thy expanded heart.
Those feelings are extinct — all swallow'd up
In one poor, petty, selfish passion. Now
Thy heart is wither'd, dead! No tears hast thou
For the unhappy fate of wretched Flanders —
No, not another tear. O, Carlos! see
How poor, how beggarly, thou hast become,
Since all thy love has centred in thyself.

CARLOS (*flings himself into a chair. — After a pause, with scarcely suppressed tears*).

Too well I know thou lov'st me now no more!

MARQUIS.

Not so, my Carlos. Well I understand
This fiery passion: 'tis the misdirection
Of feelings pure and noble in themselves.
The queen belong'd to thee: the king, thy father,
Despoil'd thee of her — yet till now thou hast
Been modestly distrustful of thy claims.
Philip, perhaps, was worthy of her! Thou
Scarce dared to breathe his sentence in a whisper.
This letter has resolved thy doubts, and proved
Thou art the worthier man. With haughty joy
Thou saw'st before thee rise the doom that waits
On tyranny convicted of a theft,
But thou wert proud to be the injured one:
Wrongs undeserv'd great souls can calmly suffer,

Yet here thy fancy played thee false: thy pride
Was touch'd with satisfaction, and thy heart
Allow'd itself to hope: I plainly saw
This time, at least, thou didst not know thyself.

CARLOS (*with emotion*).

Thou'rt wrong, Roderigo; for my thoughts were far
Less noble than thy goodness would persuade me.

MARQUIS.

And am I then e'en here so little known?
See, Carlos, when thou errest, 'tis my way,
Amid a hundred virtues, still to find
That one to which I may impute thy fall.
Now, then, we understand each other better,
And thou shalt have an audience of the queen.

CARLOS (*falling on his neck*).

O, how I blush beside thee!

MARQUIS.

Take my word,
And leave the rest to me. A wild, bold thought,
A happy thought, is dawning in my mind;
And thou shalt hear it from a fairer mouth.
I hasten to the queen. Perhaps to-morrow
Thy wish may be achieved. Till then, my Carlos,
Forget not this — "That a design conceived
Of lofty reason, which involves the fate,
The suff'rings of mankind, tho' it be baffled
Ten thousand times, should never be abandoned."
Dost hear? — Remember Flanders.

CARLOS.

Yes! all, all
That thou and virtue bid me not forget.

MARQUIS (*going to a window*).

The time is up — I hear thy suite approaching.
[*They embrace.*
Crown prince again, and vassal.

CARLOS.

Dost thou go
Straight to Madrid?

MARQUIS.

Yes, straight.

CARLOS.

Hold! one word more.
How nearly it escaped me! Yet 'twas news
Of deep importance. "Every letter now
Sent to Brabant is opened by the king!"
So be upon thy guard. The royal post
Has secret orders.

MARQUIS.

How have you learnt this?

CARLOS.

Don Raimond Taxis is my trusty friend.

MARQUIS (*after a pause*).

Well! — then they may be sent through Germany.
[*Exeunt on different sides.*

ACT III.

Scene I.

The King's Bedchamber.

On the toilet two burning lights. In the background several Pages asleep resting on their knees. The King, *in half undress, stands before the table, with one arm bent over the chair in a reflecting posture. Before him is a medallion and papers.*

KING.

Of a warm fancy she has ever been!
Who can deny it? I could never love her,
Yet has she never seem'd to miss my love.
And so 'tis plain — she's false!
[*Makes a movement which brings him to himself. — He looks around with surprise.*
Where have I been?
Is no one watching here, then, save the king?
The light's burnt out, and yet it is not day.
I must forego my slumbers for to-night.
Take it, kind nature, for enjoy'd! No time
Have monarchs to retrieve the nights they lose.
I'm now awake, and day it shall be. —
[*He puts out the candles, and draws aside the window curtain. He observes the sleeping Pages — remains for some time standing before them — them rings a bell.*
All
Asleep within the antechamber too?

Scene II.

The King, Count Lerma.

LERMA (*surprised at seeing the* KING).

Does not your Majesty feel well?

KING.

The left
Pavilion of the palace was in flames:
Did you not hear the alarum?

LERMA.

No, my liege.

KING.

No! What? And did I only dream it then?
'Twas surely real! Does not the queen sleep there?

LERMA.

She does, your Majesty.

KING.

This dream affrights me!
In future let the guards be doubled there
As soon as it grows dark. Dost hear? And yet
Let it be done in secret. — I would not —
Why do you gaze on me? —

LERMA.

Your bloodshot eyes
I mark, that beg repose. Dare I remind
My liege of an inestimable life,
And of your subjects, who with pale dismay

Would in such features read of restless nights?
But two brief hours of morning sleep would —

KING (*with troubled look*).

Sleep!

Shall I find sleep within the Escurial: —
Let the king sleep, and he may lose his crown.
The husband, his wife's heart. But no! not so —
This is but slander. Was it not a woman
Whisper'd the crime to me? Woman, thy name
Is calumny! — The deed I'll hold unprov'd,
Until a man confirms the fatal truth!
[*To the Pages, who in the meanwhile have awaked.*
Summon Duke Alva! [*Pages go.*
Count! come nearer to me.
[*Fixes a searching look on the* COUNT.
Is all this true? O! for Omniscience now,
Tho' but so long as a man's pulse might beat!
Is it true? Upon your oath! Am I deceived?

LERMA.

My great, my best of kings!

KING (*drawing back*).

King! Nought but king!
And king again! No better answer than
Mere hollow echo! When I strike this rock
For water, to assuage my burning thirst,
It gives me molten gold.

LERMA.

What true, my liege?

KING.

O! nothing — nothing! Leave me! Get thee gone!
[*The* COUNT *going, the* KING *calls him back again.*
Say, are you married? and are you a father?

LERMA.

I am, your Majesty.

KING.

What! married — yet
You dare to watch a night here with your king!
Your hair is gray, and yet you do not blush
To think your wife is honest. Get thee home,
You'll find her lock'd, this moment, in your son's
Incestuous embrace. Believe your king.
Now go — you stand amazed — you stare at me
With searching eye, because of my gray hairs!
Unhappy man, reflect. Queens never taint
Their virtue thus: — doubt it, and you shall die!

LERMA (*with warmth*).

Who dare do so? In all my monarch's realms,
Who has the daring hardihood to breathe
Suspicion on her angel purity?
To slander thus the best of queens —

KING.

The best!
The best, from you too! She has ardent friends,
I find, around. It must have cost her much —
More than methinks she could afford to give.
You are dismiss'd. — Now send the duke to me.

LERMA.

I hear him in the antechamber. [*Going.*

KING (*with a milder tone*).

Count,
What you observed is very true. — My head
Burns with the fever of this sleepless night!
What I have utter'd in this waking dream,
Mark you! — forget! I am your gracious king!
[*Presents his hand to kiss. Exit* LERMA, *opening the door at the same time to* DUKE ALVA.

SCENE III.

The KING *and* DUKE ALVA.

ALVA (*approaching the* KING *with an air of doubt*).

This unexpected order, at so strange
An hour! [*Starts on looking closer at the* KING.
And then those looks!

KING (*has seated himself, and taken hold of the medallion on the table. — Looks at the* DUKE *for some time in silence*).

And is it true
I have no faithful servant!

ALVA.

How?

KING.

A blow
Aim'd at my life in its most vital part!
Full well 'twas known, yet no one warn'd me of it.

ALVA (*with a look of astonishment*).

A blow aim'd at your Majesty! and yet
Escape your Alva's eye?

KING (*showing him letters*).

Know you this writing?

ALVA.

It is the prince's hand.

KING (*a pause — watches the* DUKE *closely*).

Do you suspect
Then nothing? — Often have you caution'd me
'Gainst his ambition — Was there nothing more
Than his ambition should have made me tremble?

ALVA.

Ambition is a word of largest import,
And much it may comprise.

KING.

And had you nought
Of special purport to disclose?

ALVA (*after a pause, mysteriously*).

Your Majesty
Hath given the kingdom's welfare to my charge: —
On this my inmost, secret thoughts are bent,
And my best vigilance. Beyond this charge
What I may think, suspect, or know, belongs
To me alone. These are the sacred treasures
Which not the vassal only, but the slave —
The very slave — may from a king withhold.
Not all that to my mind seems plain is yet
Mature enough to meet the monarch's ear.
Would he be answered — then must I implore
He will not question as a king.

KING (*handing the letters*).

Read these.

ALVA (*reads them, and turns to the* KING *with a look of terror*).

Who was the madman placed these fatal papers
In my king's hands?

KING.

You know, then, who is meant?
No name, you see, is mentioned in the paper.

ALVA (*stepping back confused*).

I was too hasty!

KING.

But you know!

ALVA (*after some consideration*).

'Tis spoken!
The king commands, — I dare not now conceal.
I'll not deny it — I *do* know the person.

KING (*starting up in violent emotion*).

God of Revenge! inspire me to invent
Some new, unheard-of torture! Is their crime
So clear, so plain, so public to the world,
That without e'en the trouble of inquiry
The veriest hint suffices to reveal it?
This is too much! I did not dream of this!
I am the last of all, then, to discern it —
The last in all my realm?

ALVA (*throwing himself at the* KING'S *feet*).

Yes, I confess
My guilt, most gracious monarch. I'm ashamed

A coward prudence should have tied my tongue
When truth, and justice, and my sovereign's honour,
Urged me to speak. But since all else are silent,
And since the magic spell of beauty binds
All other tongues, — I dare to give it voice;
Though well I know, a son's warm protestations,
A wife's seductive charms and winning tears —

KING (*suddenly with warmth*).

Rise, Alva! thou hast now my royal promise —
Rise, and speak fearlessly!

ALVA (*rising*).

Your Majesty,
Perchance, may bear in your remembrance still,
What happen'd in the garden at Aranjuez.
You found the queen deserted by her ladies,
With looks confused — alone, within a bower, —

KING.

Proceed! What further have I yet to hear? —

ALVA.

The Marchioness of Mondecar was banished
Because she boldly sacrificed herself
To save the queen! It has been since discovered,
She did no more than she had been commanded.
— Prince Carlos had been there.

KING (*starting*).

The prince! What more?

ALVA.

Upon the ground, the footsteps of a man
Were traced, till finally they disappeared

Close to a grotto, leftward of the bower,
Where lay a handkerchief the prince had dropped;
This waken'd our suspicions. — But besides,
The gardener met the prince upon the spot, —
Just at the time, as near as we can guess,
Your Majesty appeared within the walk.

KING (*recovering from gloomy thought*).

And yet she wept when I but seem'd to doubt!
She made me blush before th' assembl'd court,
Blush to my very self! By Heaven! I stood
In presence of her virtue, like a culprit.
[*A long and deep silence. — He sits down and hides his face.*
Yes, Alva, you are right! — All this may lead
To something dreadful — Leave me for a moment —

ALVA.

But, gracious Sire, all this is not enough —

KING (*snatching up his papers*).

Nor this, nor this? — Nor all the harmony
Of these most damning proofs? 'Tis clear as day —
I knew it long ago — their heinous guilt
Began, when first I took her from your hands,
Here in Madrid. I think I see her now,
With look of horror, pale as midnight ghost,
Fixing her eyes upon my hoary hair!
'Twas then the treacherous game began!

ALVA.

The prince,
In welcoming a mother — lost his bride!
Long had they nursed a mutual passion, long
Each other's ardent feelings understood,
Which her new state forbade her to indulge.

The fear which still attends love's first avowal
Was long subdued. Seduction, bolder grown,
Spoke in those forms of easy confidence
Which recollections of the past allowed.
Allied by harmony of souls and years,
And now by similar restraints provoked,
They readily obey'd their wild desires.
Reasons of state opposed their early union —
But can it, Sire, be thought she ever gave
To the State Council such authority?
That she subdued the passion of her soul
To scrutinise with more attentive eye
The election of the cabinet? Her heart
Was bent on love, and won a diadem.

KING (*offended, and with bitterness*).

You are a nice observer, duke, and I
Admire your eloquence. I thank you truly.
[*Rising, coldly and haughtily.*
But you are right. The queen has deeply err'd,
In keeping from me letters of such import,
And in concealing the intrusive visit
The prince paid in the garden: — from a false
Mistaken honour she hath deeply err'd,
And I shall question further. [*Ringing the bell.*
Who waits now
Within the antechamber? You, Duke Alva,
I need no longer. — Go.

ALVA.

And has my zeal
A second time displeased your Majesty?

KING (*to a* PAGE *who enters*).

Summon Domingo. Duke, I pardon you
For having made me tremble, for a moment,

With secret apprehension, lest yourself
Might fall a victim to a foul misdeed. [*Exit* ALVA.

SCENE IV.

The KING, DOMINGO.

KING *walks up and down the room to collect his thoughts.*

DOMINGO (*after contemplating the* KING *for some time with a respectful silence*).

How joyfully surprised I am to find
Your Majesty so tranquil and collected.

KING.

Surprised!

DOMINGO.

And Heav'n be thank'd my fears were groundless!
Now may I hope the best.

KING.

Your fears! What feared you?

DOMINGO.

I dare not hide it from your Majesty
That I have learn'd a secret —

KING (*gloomily*).

And have I
Express'd a wish to share your secret with you?
Who ventures to anticipate me thus? —
Too forward, by mine honour!

DOMINGO.

Gracious monarch!
The place, the occasion, seal of secrecy
'Neath which I learn'd it — free me from this charge.
It was entrusted to me at the seat
Of penitence — entrusted as a crime
That deeply weigh'd upon the tender soul
Of the fair sinner who confess'd her guilt,
And sought the pardon of offended Heaven.
Too late the princess weeps a foul misdeed
That may involve the queen herself in ruin.

KING.

Indeed! Kind soul! — You have correctly guess'd
The occasion of your summons. You must guide me
Through this dark labyrinth wherein blind zeal
Has tangled me. From you I hope for truth.
Be candid with me; what must I believe,
And what determine? From your sacred office
I look for strictest truth.

DOMINGO.

And if, my liege,
The mildness ever incident to this,
My holy calling, did not such restraint
Impose upon me, still I would entreat
Your Majesty, for your own peace of mind,
To urge no farther this discovery,
And cease for ever to pursue a secret
Which never can be happily explain'd.
All that is yet discover'd may be pardon'd.
Let the king say the word — and then the queen
Has never sinn'd. The monarch's will bestows
Virtue and fortune, both with equal ease.
And the king's undisturb'd tranquillity

Is, in itself, sufficient to destroy
The rumours set on foot by calumny.

KING.

What! Rumours! and of me! among my subjects!

DOMINGO.

All falsehood, Sire! Naught but the vilest falsehood:
I'll swear 'tis false! — Yet what's believed by all,
Groundless and unconfirm'd altho' it be,
Works its effect, as sure as truth itself.

KING.

Not in this case, by Heaven!

DOMINGO.

A virtuous name
Is, after all, my liege, the only prize
Which queens and peasants' wives contest together.

KING.

For which I surely have no need to tremble.
[*He looks doubtingly at* DOMINGO. — *After a pause.*
Priest, thou hast something fearful to impart.
Delay it not. I read it plainly stamp'd
In thy ill-boding looks. Then out with it,
Whate'er it be. Let me no longer tremble
Upon the rack. What do the people say?

DOMINGO.

The people, Sire, are liable to err,
Nay, err assuredly. What people think
Should not alarm the king. Yet that they should
Presume so far as to indulge such thoughts —

KING.

Why must I beg this poisonous draught so long?

DOMINGO.

The people often muse upon that month
Which brought your Majesty so near the grave.
From that time, thirty weeks had scarce elapsed,
Before the queen's delivery was announced —
[*The* KING *rises and rings the bell.* DUKE ALVA *enters.* DOMINGO *alarmed.*
I am amazed, your Majesty!

KING (*going toward* ALVA).

Toledo!
You are a man — defend me from this priest!

DOMINGO (*he and* DUKE ALVA *exchange embarrassed looks. — After a pause*).

Could we have but foreseen that this occurrence
Would be revenged upon its mere relater —

KING.

Said you a bastard? I had scarce, you say,
Escaped the pangs of death when first she felt
She should, in nature's time, become a mother.
Explain how this occurred! 'Twas then, if I
Remember right, that you, in every church,
Ordered devotions to St. Dominick,
For the especial wonder he vouchsafed. —
On one side or the other, then, you lie! —
What would you have me credit? O, I see
Full plainly through you now! If this dark plot
Had then been ripe, your saint had lost his fame.

ALVA.

This plot?

KING.

How can you with a harmony
So unexampled, in your very thoughts
Concur, and not have first conspired together?
Would you persuade me thus? Think you that I
Perceived not with what eagerness you pounced
Upon your prey? With what delight you fed
Upon my pain, — my agony of grief?
Full well I mark'd the ardent, burning zeal
With which the duke forestall'd the mark of grace
I destined for my son. And how this priest
Presumed to fortify his petty spleen
With my wrath's giant arm! I am, forsooth,
A bow which each of you may bend at pleasure!
But I have yet a will. And if I needs
Must doubt — perhaps I may begin with you.

ALVA.

Reward like this, our truth did ne'er expect.

KING.

Your truth! Truth warns of apprehended danger.
'Tis malice that speaks only of the past.
What can I gain by your officiousness?
Should your suspicions ripen to full truth,
What follows but the pang of separation,
The melancholy triumph of revenge?
But no: you only fear — you feed me with
Conjectures vague. To hell's profound abyss
You lead me on, then flee yourselves away.

DOMINGO.

What other proofs than these are possible,
When our own eyes can scarcely trust themselves?

KING (*after a long pause, turning earnestly and solemnly toward* DOMINGO).

The grandees of the realm shall be convened,
And I will sit in judgment. Then step forth
In front of all, if you have courage for it,
And charge her as a strumpet. She shall die —
Die without mercy — and the prince, too, with her.
But mark me well: if she but clear herself,
That doom shall fall on you. Now dare you show
Honour to truth by such a sacrifice?
Determine. — No, you dare not. You are silent,
Such is the zeal of liars!

ALVA (*who has stood at a distance, answers coldly and calmly*).

I will do it.

KING (*turns around with astonishment and looks at the* DUKE *for a long time without moving*).

That's boldly said! But thou hast risk'd thy life
In stubborn conflicts for far less a prize.
Hast risk'd it with a gamester's recklessness —
For honour's empty bubble. What is life
To thee? I'll not expose the royal blood
To such a madman's power, whose highest hope
Must be, to yield his wretched being up
With some renown. I spurn your offer. Go;
And wait my orders in the audience chamber.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

The KING *alone.*

Now give me, gracious Providence! a man.
Thou'st given me much already. Now vouchsafe me

A man! for thou alone canst grant the boon.
Thine eye doth penetrate all hidden things.
O! give me but a friend: for I am not
Omniscient like to thee. The ministers,
Whom thou hast chosen for me, thou dost know —
And their deserts: and as their merits claim,
I value them. Their subjugated vices,
Coerced by rein severe, serve all my ends,
As thy storms purify this nether world.
I thirst for truth. — To reach its tranquil spring,
Through the dark heaps of thick surrounding error,
Is not the lot of kings. Give me the man,
So rarely found, of pure and open heart,
Of judgment clear, and eye unprejudiced,
To aid me in the search. — I cast the lots.
And may I find that man, among the thousands
Who flutter in the sunshine of a court.

[*He opens an escritoire and takes out a portfolio. After turning over the leaves a long time.*

Nothing but names, mere names are here: — no note
E'en of the services to which they owe
Their place upon the roll! O what can be
Of shorter memory than gratitude?
Here, in this other list, I read each fault
Most accurately mark'd. That is not well!
Can vengeance stand in need of such a help?

[*He reads farther.*

Count Egmont! What doth he here? Long ago
The vict'ry of St. Quentin is forgotten.
I place him with the dead.

[*He effaces this name and writes it on the other roll. After he has read farther.*

The Marquis Posa!
The Marquis Posa! — I can scarce recall
This person to my mind. And doubly mark'd!
A proof I destined him for some great purpose.
How is it possible? This man, till now,

Has ever shunn'd my presence — still has fled
His royal debtor's eye? The only man,
By Heaven, within the compass of my realm,
Who does not court my favour. Did he burn
With avarice, or ambition, long ago
He had appear'd before my throne. I'll try
This wondrous man. He who can thus dispense
With royalty, will doubtless speak the truth.

Scene VI.

The Audience Chamber.

Don Carlos *in conversation with the* Prince of Parma. Dukes Alva, Feria, *and* Medina Sidonia, Count Lerma, *and other Grandees, with papers in their hands, awaiting the* King.

MEDINA SIDONIA (*seems to be shunned by all the Grandees, turns toward* DUKE ALVA, *who, alone and absorbed in himself, walks up and down*).

Duke, you have had an audience of the king,
How did you find him minded?

ALVA.

Somewhat ill
For you, and for the news you bring.

MEDINA SIDONIA.

My heart
Was lighter 'mid the roar of English cannon,
Than here on Spanish ground.

[Carlos, *who had regarded him with silent sympathy, now approaches him and presses his hand.*

Has ever shunn'd my presence — still has fled
His royal debtor's eye? The only man,
By Heaven, within the compass of my realm,
Who does not court my favour. Did he burn
With avarice, or ambition, long ago
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Duke, you have had an audience of the king,
How did you find him minded?

ALVA.

Somewhat ill
For you, and for the news you bring.

MEDINA SIDONIA.

My heart
Was lighter 'mid the roar of English cannon,
Than here on Spanish ground.

[Carlos, *who had regarded him with silent sympathy, now approaches him and presses his hand.*

My warmest thanks,
Prince, for this generous tear! — You may perceive
How all avoid me. Now my fate is seal'd.

CARLOS.

Still hope the best both from my father's favour,
And your own innocence.

MEDINA SIDONIA.

Prince! I have lost
A fleet, more mighty than e'er plough'd the waves.
And what is such a head as mine, to set
'Gainst seventy sunken galleons? And therewith
Five hopeful sons! Alas! that breaks my heart.

Scene VII.

The King *enters from his Chamber, attired. The former all uncover and make room on both sides, while they form a semicircle around him. — Silence.*

KING (*rapidly surveying the whole circle*).

Be covered all.

[Don Carlos *and the* Prince of Parma *approach first and kiss the* King's *hand: he turns with friendly mien to the latter, taking no notice of his son.*

Your mother, nephew, fain
Would be inform'd what favour you have won
Here in Madrid.

PARMA.

That question let her ask
When I have fought my maiden battle, Sire.

KING.

Be satisfied, your turn will come at last,
When these old props decay. [*To the* DUKE OF FERIA.
What brings you here?

FERIA (*kneeling to the* KING).

The Master, Sire, of Calatrava's order
This morning died. I here return his cross.

KING (*takes the order and looks around the whole circle*).

And who is worthiest after him to wear it?
[*He beckons to* DUKE ALVA, *who approaches and bends on one knee. The* KING *hangs the order on his neck.*
You are my ablest general! Ne'er aspire
To more, and, duke, my favours shall not fail you.
[*He perceives the* DUKE OF MEDINA SIDONIA.
My admiral!

MEDINA SIDONIA.

And here you see, great king,
All that remains of the Armada's might,
And of the flower of Spain.

KING (*after a pause*).

God rules above us!
I sent you to contend with men, and not
With rocks and storms. You're welcome to Madrid.
[*Extending his hand to him to kiss.*
I thank you for preserving in yourself
A faithful servant to me. For as such
I value him, my lords; and 'tis my will
That you should honour him.
[*He motions him to rise and cover himself, then turns to the others.*
What more remains?
[*To* DON CARLOS *and the* PRINCE OF PARMA.

Princes, I thank you!

[*They retire; the other Grandees approach, and kneeling, hand their papers to the* KING. *He looks over them rapidly, and hands them to* DUKE ALVA.

Duke! let these be laid
Before me in the Council. Who waits further?

[*No one answers.*

How comes it that amidst my train of nobles
The Marquis Posa ne'er appears? I know
This Marquis Posa served me with distinction.
Does he still live? Why is he not among you?

LERMA.

The chevalier is just return'd from travel,
Completed through all Europe. He is now
Here in Madrid, and waits a public day
To cast himself before his sovereign's feet.

ALVA.

The Marquis Posa! — Right, he is the same
Bold Knight of Malta, Sire, of whom renown
Proclaims this gallant deed. Upon a summons
Of the Grand Master, all the valiant knights
Assembled in their island, at that time
Besieged by Soliman. This noble youth,
Scarce numbering eighteen summers, straightway fled
From Alcala, where he pursued his studies,
And suddenly arrived at La Valette.
"This Cross," he said, "was bought for me; and now
To prove I'm worthy of it." He was one
Of forty knights who held St. Elmo's Castle,
At mid-day, 'gainst Piali, Ulucciali,
And Mustapha, and Hassem; the assault
Being thrice repeated. When the castle fell,
And all the valiant knights were kill'd around him,

He plunged into the ocean, and alone
Reached La Valette in safety. Two months after,
The foe deserts the island, and the knight
Return'd to end his interrupted studies.

FERIA.

It was the Marquis Posa, too, who crush'd
The dread conspiracy in Catalonia;
And by his mark'd activity, preserved
That powerful province to the Spanish Crown.

KING.

I am amazed! What sort of man is this,
Who can deserve so highly, yet awake
No pang of envy in the breasts of three
Who speak his praise? The character he owns
Must be of noble stamp, indeed, or else
A very blank. I'm curious to behold
This wond'rous man. [*To* DUKE ALVA.
Conduct him to the Council
When mass is over.
[*Exit* DUKE. *The* KING *calls* FERIA.
And do you preside
Here in my place. [*Exit.*

FERIA.

The king is kind to-day.

MEDINA SIDONIA.

Call him a god! So he has proved to me!

FERIA.

You well deserve your fortune, admiral!
You have my warmest wishes.

ONE OF THE GRANDEES.

Sir, and mine.

A SECOND.

And also mine!

A THIRD.

My heart exults with joy —
So excellent a general!

THE FIRST.

The king
Show'd you no kindness, — 'twas your strict desert.

LERMA (*to* MEDINA SIDONIA, *taking leave*).

O, how two little words have made your fortune!

[*Exeunt all.*

SCENE VIII.

The KING'S *Cabinet.*

MARQUIS POSA *and* DUKE ALVA.

MARQUIS (*as he enters*).

Does he want me? — What, me? — Impossible!
You must mistake the name. What can he want
With me?

ALVA.

To know you.

MARQUIS.

Curiosity!
No more; and I regret the precious minutes
That I must lose: time passes swiftly by.

ALVA.

I now commend you to your lucky stars.
The king is in your hands. Employ this moment
To your own best advantage; for, remember,
If it is lost, you are alone to blame.

Scene IX.

The Marquis *alone.*

MARQUIS.

Duke, 'tis well spoken! Turn to good account
The moment which presents itself but once!
Truly this courtier reads a useful lesson:
If not in his sense good, at least in mine.
[*Walks a few steps backwards and forwards.*
How came I here? Is it caprice or chance
That shows me now my image in this mirror?
Why, out of millions, should it picture me —
The most unlikely — and present my form
To the king's memory? — Was this but chance? —
Perhaps 'twas something more! — What else is chance
But the rude stone which from the sculptor's hand
Receives its life? — Chance comes from Providence,
And man must mould it to his own designs.
What the king wants with me but little matters;
I know the business I shall have with him.
Were but one spark of truth with boldness flung
Into the despot's soul, how fruitful 'twere
In the kind hand of Providence; and so
What first appear'd capricious act of chance,
May be design'd for some momentous end.
Whate'er it be, I'll act on this belief.

[*He takes a few turns in the room, and stands at last in tranquil contemplation before a painting. The* King *appears in the neighbouring room, where he gives some orders. He then enters and stands motionless at the door, and contemplates the* Marquis *for some time; without being observed.*

Scene X.

The King, *and* Marquis Posa.

The Marquis, *as soon as he observes the* King, *comes forward and sinks on one knee; then rises and remains standing before him without any sign of confusion.*

KING (*looks at him with surprise*).

We've met before then? —

MARQUIS.

No.

KING.

You did my crown
Some service? Why then do you shun my thanks?
My memory is throng'd with suitors' claims.
One only is Omniscient. 'Twas your duty
To seek your monarch's eye! — Why did you not?

MARQUIS.

Two days have scarce elapsed since my return
From foreign travel, Sire.

KING.

I would not stand
Indebted to a subject; ask some favour —

MARQUIS.

I enjoy the laws.

KING.

So does the murderer!

MARQUIS.

Then how much more the honest citizen!
My lot contents me, Sire.

KING (*aside*).

By heavens! a proud
And dauntless mind! — That was to be expected.
Proud I would have my Spaniards. Better far
The cup should overflow, than not be full.
They say you've left my service?

MARQUIS.

To make way
For some one worthier, I withdrew.

KING.

'Tis pity.
When spirits such as yours make holiday,
The state must suffer. But perchance you fear'd
To miss the post best suited to your merits.

MARQUIS.

O no! I doubt not the experienced judge,
In human nature skill'd, — his proper study, —
Will have discover'd at a glance wherein
I may be useful to him, wherein not.
With deepest gratitude, I feel the favour
Wherewith, by so exalted an opinion,
Your Majesty is loading me; and yet — [*He pauses.*

KING.

You hesitate?

MARQUIS.

I am, I must confess,
Sire, at this moment, unprepared to clothe

My thoughts, as the world's citizen, in phrase
Beseeming to your subject. When I left
The court for ever, Sire, I deem'd myself
Released from the necessity to give
My reasons for this step.

KING.

Are they so weak?
What do you fear to risk by their disclosure?

MARQUIS.

My life at farthest, Sire, — were time allow'd
For me to weary you — but this denied —
Then truth itself must suffer. I must choose
'Twixt your displeasure and contempt. And if
I must decide, I rather would appear
Worthy of punishment than pity.

KING (*with a look of expectation*).

Well?

MARQUIS.

I cannot be the servant of a prince.
[*The* KING *looks at him with astonishment.*
I will not cheat the buyer. Should you deem
Me worthy of your service, you prescribe
A course of duty for me; you command
My arm in battle, and my head in council.
Then, not my actions, but the applause they meet
At court, becomes their object. But for me,
Virtue possesses an intrinsic worth.
I would, myself, create that happiness
A monarch, with my hand, would seek to plant;
And duty's task would prove an inward joy,
And be my willing choice. Say, like you this?

And in your own creation, could you bear
A new creator? For I ne'er could stoop
To be the chisel, where I fain would be
The sculptor's self. I dearly love mankind,
My gracious liege, but in a monarchy,
I dare not love another than myself.

KING.

This ardour is most laudable. You wish
To do good deeds to others: how you do them
Is but of small account to patriots,
Or to the wise. Choose then within these realms
The office where you best may satisfy
This noble impulse.

MARQUIS.

'Tis not to be found.

KING.

How!

MARQUIS.

What your Majesty would spread abroad,
Through these my hands — is it the good of men?
Is it the happiness that my pure love
Would to mankind impart? Before such bliss
Monarchs would tremble. No! Court policy
Has raised up new enjoyments for mankind,
Which she is always rich enough to grant;
And waken'd, in the hearts of men, new wishes
Which such enjoyments only can content.
In her own mint, she coins the truth — such truth!
As she herself can tolerate: all forms
Unlike her own are broken. But is that
Which can content the court enough for me?
Must my affection for my brother pledge
Itself to work my brother injury?
To call him happy, when he dare not think?

Sire, choose not me to spread the happiness
Which you have stamp'd for us. I must decline
To circulate such coin. I cannot be
The servant of a prince.

KING (*suddenly*).

You are, perhaps,
A Protestant?

MARQUIS (*after some reflection*).

Our creeds, my liege, are one. [*A pause.*
I am misunderstood. I fear'd as much.
You see the veil torn by my hand aside
From all the mysteries of Majesty.
Who can assure you I shall still regard
As sacred, that which ceases to alarm me?
I may seem dangerous, because I think
Above myself. — I am not so, my liege;
My wishes lie corroding here. The rage
[*Laying his hand on his breast.*
For innovation, which but serves t' increase
The heavy weight of chains it cannot break,
Shall never fire my blood! The world is yet
Unripe for my Ideal; and I live
A citizen of ages yet to come.
But does a fancied picture break your rest?
A breath of yours destroys it.

KING.

Say, am I
The first to whom your views are known?

MARQUIS.

You are.

KING (*rises, walks a few paces, and then stops opposite the* MARQUIS — *aside*).

This tone, at least, is new; but flattery
Exhausts itself. And men of talent still
Disdain to imitate. So let us test
Its opposite for once. Why should I not?
There is a charm in novelty. — Should we
Be so agreed, I will bethink me now
Of some new state employment, in whose duties
Your powerful mind —

MARQUIS.

Sire, I perceive how small,
How mean, your notions are of manly worth.
Suspecting, in an honest man's discourse,
Nought but a flatterer's artifice, — methinks
I can explain the cause of this your error.
Mankind compel you to it. With free choice
They have disclaim'd their true nobility,
Lower'd themselves to their degraded state. —
Before man's inward worth, as from a phantom,
They fly in terror, — and contented with
Their poverty, they ornament their chains
With slavish prudence; and they call it virtue,
To bear them with a show of resignation.
Thus did you find the world, and thus it was
By your great father handed o'er to you.
In this debased condition — how could you
Respect mankind?

KING.

Your words contain some truth.

MARQUIS.

Alas! that when from the Creator's hand
You took mankind, and moulded him to suit

Your own ideas, making yourself the god
Of this new creature, you should overlook
That you yourself remained a human being —
A very man, as from God's hands you came. —
Still did you feel a mortal's wants and pains.
You needed sympathy; but to a god
One can but sacrifice, and pray, and tremble —
Wretched exchange! Perversion most unblest
Of sacred nature! — Once degrade mankind,
And make him but a thing to play upon,
Who then can share the harmony with you?

KING (*aside*).

By Heaven, he moves me!

MARQUIS.

But this sacrifice
To you is valueless. You thus become
A thing apart, a species of your own —
This is the price you pay for being a god!
'Twere dreadful were it not so, and if you
Gain'd nothing by the misery of millions!
And if the very freedom you destroy'd
Were the sole blessing, that could make you happy!
Dismiss me, Sire, I pray you; for my theme
Bears me too far — my heart is full — too strong
The charm, to stand before the only man
To whom I may reveal it.

[*The* COUNT LERMA *enters, and whispers a few words to the* KING, *who signs him to withdraw, and continues sitting in his former posture.*

KING (*to the* MARQUIS, *after* LERMA *is gone*).

Nay, continue.

MARQUIS (*after a pause*).

I feel, Sire — all the worth —

KING.

Proceed — you had
Yet more to say to me.

MARQUIS.

Your Majesty,
I lately pass'd through Flanders and Brabant,
So many rich and blooming provinces,
Fill'd with a valiant, great, and honest people!
To be the father of a race like this,
I thought must be divine indeed! and then
I stumbled on a heap of burnt men's bones!

[*He stops, he fixes a penetrating look on the* KING, *who endeavours to return his glance; but he looks on the ground, embarrassed and confused.*

True, you are forced to act so; but that you
Could dare fulfil your task — this fills my soul
With shuddering horror! O 'tis pity that
The victim, weltering in his blood, must cease
To chant the praises of his sacrificer!
And that mere men — not beings loftier far —
Should write the history of the world. But soon
A milder age will follow that of Philip,
An age of truer wisdom: — hand in hand,
The subjects' welfare, and the sovereign's greatness,
Will walk in union. Then the careful state
Will spare her children, and necessity
No longer glory to be thus inhuman.

KING.

When, think you, would that blessed age arrive,
If I had shrunk before the curse of this?

Behold my Spain, see here the burgher's good
Blooms in eternal and unclouded peace.
A peace like this will I bestow on Flanders.

MARQUIS (*hastily*).

The churchyard's peace! And do you hope to end
What you have now begun? Say, do you hope
To check the ripening change of Christendom,
The universal spring, that shall renew
The earth's fair form? Would you alone, in Europe,
Fling yourself down before the rapid wheel
Of destiny — which rolls its ceaseless course —
And seize its spokes with human arm. Vain thought!
Already thousands have your kingdom fled,
In joyful poverty: the honest burgher,
For his faith exiled, was your noblest subject!
See, with a mother's arms, Elizabeth
Welcomes the fugitives, and Britain blooms
In rich luxuriance, from our country's arts.
Bereft of the new Christian's industry,
Grenada lies forsaken, and all Europe,
Exulting, sees its foe oppress'd with wounds,
By its own hands inflicted!

[*The* KING *is moved; the* MARQUIS *observes it, and advances a step nearer.*

You would plant
For all eternity — and yet the seeds
You sow around you are the seeds of death!
This hopeless task, with nature's laws at strife,
Will ne'er survive the spirit of its founder.
You labour for ingratitude: — in vain,
With nature you engage in desperate struggle —
In vain you waste your high and royal life
In projects of destruction. Man is greater
Than you esteem him. He will burst the chains
Of a long slumber, and reclaim once more
His just and hallow'd rights. With Nero's name,

And fell Busiris', will he couple yours:
And — ah! you once deserved a better fate.

KING.

How know you that?

MARQUIS.

In very truth you did —
Yes, I repeat it — by the Almighty power!
Restore us all you have deprived us of,
And, generous as strong, let happiness
Flow from your horn of plenty — let man's mind
Ripen in your vast empire — give us back
All you have taken from us — and become,
Amidst a thousand kings, a king indeed!
[*He advances boldly, and fixes on him a look of earnestness and enthusiasm.*
O! that the eloquence of all those myriads,
Whose fate depends on this momentous hour,
Could hover on my lips, and fan the spark
That lights thine eye into a glorious flame!
Renounce the mimicry of godlike powers
Which levels us to nothing. Be, in truth,
An image of the Deity himself!
Never did mortal man possess so much,
For purpose so divine. The kings of Europe
Pay homage to the name of Spain. Be you
The leader of these kings. One pen-stroke now,
One motion of your hand, can new create
The earth! — but grant us liberty of thought.
[*Casts himself at his feet.*

KING (*surprised, turns away his face, then again looks toward the* MARQUIS).

Enthusiast most strange! arise; but I —

MARQUIS.

Look round on all the glorious face of nature,
On freedom it is founded — see how rich,
Through freedom, it has grown. The great Creator
Bestows upon the worm its drop of dew,
And gives free-will a triumph in abodes
Where lone corruption reigns. See *your* creation,
How small, how poor! The rustling of a leaf
Alarms the mighty lord of Christendom.
Each virtue makes you quake with fear. While he,
Not to disturb fair freedom's blest appearance,
Permits the frightful ravages of evil
To waste his fair domains. The great Creator,
We see not — he conceals himself within
His own eternal laws. The skeptic sees
Their operation, but beholds not him.
"Wherefore a God!" he cries, "the world itself
Suffices for itself!" And Christian prayer
Ne'er praised him more than doth this blasphemy.

KING.

And will you undertake to raise up this
Exalted standard of weak human nature
In my dominions?

MARQUIS.

You can do it, Sire!
Who else? Devote to your own people's bliss,
The kingly power, which has too long enrich'd
The greatness of the throne alone. Restore
The prostrate dignity of human nature,
And let the subject be, what once he was,
The end and object of the monarch's care,
Bound by no duty save a brother's love.
And when mankind is to itself restored,
Roused to a sense of its own innate worth,
When freedom's lofty virtues proudly flourish —

Then, Sire, when you have made your own wide realms
The happiest in the world, it then may be
Your duty to subdue the universe.

KING (*after a long pause*).

I've heard you to the end. Far differently
I find, than in the minds of other men,
The world exists in yours. And you shall not
By foreign laws be judged. I am the first
To whom you have your secret self disclosed;
I know it — so believe it — for the sake
Of this forbearance — that you have till now
Conceal'd these sentiments, although embraced
With so much ardour, — for this cautious prudence,
I will forget, young man, that I have learn'd them,
And how I learn'd them. Rise! I will confute
Your youthful dreams, by my matured experience,
Not by my power as king. Such is my will,
And therefore act I thus. Poison itself
May, in a worthy nature, be transform'd
To some benignant use. — But, sir, beware
My Inquisition! 'Twould afflict me much —

MARQUIS.

Indeed!

KING (*lost in surprise*).

Ne'er met I such a man as this.
No, marquis, no! you wrong me! Not to you
Will I become a Nero — not to you! —
All happiness shall not be blasted round me,
And you at least, beneath my very eyes,
May dare continue to remain a man.

MARQUIS (*quickly*).

And, Sire! my fellow subjects? Not for me,
Nor my own cause, I pleaded. Sire! your subjects —

KING.

Nay, if you know so well how future times
Will judge me, let them learn at least from you,
That when I found a man, I could respect him.

MARQUIS.

O let not the most just of kings, at once
Be the most unjust! In your realm of Flanders,
There are a thousand better men than I.
But you — Sire! may I dare to say so much —
For the first time, perhaps, see liberty
In milder form portrayed.

KING (*with gentle severity*).

No more of this,
Young man! You would, I know, think otherwise
Had you but learn'd to understand mankind
As I. — But truly — I would not this meeting
Should prove our last. — How can I hope to win you?

MARQUIS.

Pray leave me as I am. What value, Sire,
Should I be to you, were you to corrupt me?

KING.

This pride I will not bear. From this day forth
I hold you in my service. No remonstrance —
For I will have it so. [*After a pause.*
But how is this?
What would I now? Was it not truth I wish'd?
But here is something more. Marquis, so far
You've learn'd to know me as a king; but yet
You know me not as man —
[*The* MARQUIS *seems to meditate.*
I understand you —

Were I the most unfortunate of fathers,
Yet as a husband may I not be blest?

MARQUIS

If the possession of a hopeful son,
And a most lovely spouse, confer a claim
On mortal, to assume that title, Sire,
In both respects, you are supremely blest.

KING (*with a serious look*).

That am I not — and never, till this hour,
Have I so deeply felt that I am not so.
[*Contemplating the* MARQUIS *with a look of melancholy.*

MARQUIS.

The prince possesses a right noble mind.
I ne'er have known him otherwise.

KING.

I have!
The treasure he has robb'd me of, no crown
Can e'er requite. — So virtuous a queen!

MARQUIS.

Who dare assert it, Sire?

KING.

The world! and scandal!
And I myself! Here lie the damning proofs
Of doubtless guilt — and others, too, exist,
From which I fear the worst. But still 'tis hard
To trust one proof alone. — Who brings the charge?
And O! if this were possible — that she,
The queen, so foully could pollute her honour,
Then how much easier were it to believe

An Eboli may be a slanderer!
Does not that priest detest my son and her?
And can I doubt that Alva broods revenge?
My wife has higher worth than all together.

MARQUIS.

And there exists besides in woman's soul,
A treasure, Sire, beyond all outward show,
Above the reach of slander — female virtue!

KING.

Marquis! those thoughts are mine. It costs too much
To sing so low as they accuse the queen.
The sacred ties of honour are not broken
With so much ease, as some would fain persuade me.
Marquis, you know mankind. Just such a man
As you I long have wish'd for — you are kind —
Cheerful — and deeply versed in human nature —
Therefore I've chosen you —

MARQUIS (*surprised and alarmed*).

Me, Sire!

KING.

You stand
Before your king and ask no special favour —
For yourself nothing! — that is new to me —
You will be just — ne'er weakly swayed by passion.
Watch my son close — search the queen's inmost heart,
You shall have power to speak with her in private.
Retire. [*He rings a bell.*

MARQUIS.

And if with but *one* hope fulfill'd
I now depart, then is this day indeed
The happiest of my life.

KING (*holds out his hand to him to kiss*).

I hold it not
Amongst my days a lost one.
[*The* MARQUIS *rises and goes.* COUNT LERMA *enters*
Count, in future,
The marquis is to enter unannounced.

ACT IV

SCENE I.

The Queen's Apartment.

QUEEN, DUCHESS OLIVAREZ, PRINCESS EBOLI, COUNTESS FUENTES.

QUEEN (*to the first Lady as she rises*).

And so the key has not been found! My casket
Must be forced open then — and that at once.
[*She observes* PRINCESS EBOLI, *who approaches and kisses her hand.*
Welcome, dear princess! I rejoice to see you
So near recover'd. But you still look pale.

FUENTES (*with malice*).

The fault of that vile fever which affects
The nerves so painfully. Is't not, princess?

QUEEN.

I wish'd to visit you, dear Eboli,
But dared not.

OLIVAREZ.

O! the Princess Eboli
Was not in want of company.

QUEEN.

Why, that
I readily believe, but what's the matter?
You tremble —

PRINCESS.

Nothing — nothing, gracious queen.
Permit me to retire.

QUEEN.

You hide it from us —
And are far worse than you would have us think.
Standing must weary you. Assist her, countess,
And let her rest awhile upon that seat.

PRINCESS (*going*).

I shall be better in the open air.

QUEEN.

Attend her, countess. What a sudden illness.

[*A* PAGE *enters and speaks to the* DUCHESS, *who then addresses the* QUEEN.

OLIVAREZ.

The Marquis Posa waits, your Majesty,
With orders from the king.

QUEEN.

Admit him then.

[PAGE *admits the* MARQUIS *and exit.*

Scene II.

Marquis Posa. *The former.*

The Marquis *falls on one knee before the* Queen, *who signs to him to rise.*

QUEEN.

What are my lord's commands? And may I dare
Thus publicly to hear —

MARQUIS.

My business is
In private with your Royal Majesty.
[*The Ladies retire on a signal from the* Queen.

Scene III.

The Queen, Marquis Posa.

QUEEN (*full of astonishment*).

How! Marquis, dare I trust my eyes? Are you
Commission'd to me from the king?

MARQUIS.

Does this
Seem such a wonder to your Majesty?
To me 'tis otherwise.

QUEEN.

The world must sure
Have wandered from its course! That you and he —
I must confess —

MARQUIS.

It does sound somewhat strange —
But be it so. The present times abound
In prodigies.

QUEEN.

But none can equal this.

MARQUIS.

Suppose I had at last allow'd myself
To be converted, and had weary grown
Of playing the eccentric at the court
Of Philip. The eccentric! What is that?
He who would be of service to mankind
Must first endeavour to resemble them.
What end is gain'd by the vainglorious garb
Of the sectarian? Then suppose — for who
From vanity is so completely free
As for his creed to seek no proselytes? —
Suppose, I say, I had it in my mind
To place my own opinions on the throne!

QUEEN.

No, marquis! no! Not even in jest could I
Suspect you of so wild a scheme as this —
No visionary you! — to undertake
What you can ne'er accomplish.

MARQUIS.

But that seems
To be the very point at issue.

QUEEN.

What
I chiefly blame you, marquis, for, and what
Could well estrange me from you — is —

MARQUIS.

Perhaps
Duplicity!

QUEEN.

At least — a want of candour.
Perhaps the king himself has no desire
You should impart what now you mean to tell me.

MARQUIS.

No.

QUEEN.

And can evil means be justified
By honest ends? And — pardon me the doubt —
Can your high bearing stoop to such an office?
I scarce can think it.

MARQUIS.

Nor, indeed, could I,
Were my sole purpose to deceive the king.
'Tis not my wish — I mean to serve him now
More honestly than he himself commands.

QUEEN.

'Tis spoken like yourself. Enough of this —
What would the king?

MARQUIS.

The king? I can, it seems,
Retaliate quickly on my rigid judge:
And what I have deferr'd so long to tell,
Your Majesty, perhaps, would willingly
Longer defer to hear. But still it must
Be heard. The king requests your Majesty
Will grant no audience to the ambassador
Of France to-day. Such were my high commands —
They're executed.

QUEEN.

Marquis, is that all
You have to tell me from him?

MARQUIS.

Nearly all.
That justifies me thus to seek your presence.

QUEEN.

Well, marquis, I'm contented not to hear
What should, perhaps, remain a secret from me.

MARQUIS.

True, queen! though were you other than yourself,
I should inform you straight of certain things —
Warn you of certain men — but this to you
Were a vain office. Danger may arise
And disappear around you, unperceived.
You will not know it — of too little weight
To chase the slumber from your angel brow.
But 'twas not this, in sooth, that brought me hither.
Prince Carlos —

QUEEN.

What of him? How have you left him?

MARQUIS.

E'en as the only wise man of his time,
In whom it is a crime to worship truth —
And ready, for his love, to risk his life,
As the wise sage for his. I bring few words —
But here he is himself.

[*Giving the* QUEEN *a letter.*

QUEEN (*after she had read it*).

He says he must
Speak with me —

MARQUIS.

So do I.

QUEEN.

And will he thus
Be happy — when he sees with his own eyes,
That I am wretched?

MARQUIS.

No; but more resolved,
More active.

QUEEN.

How?

MARQUIS.

Duke Alva is appointed
To Flanders.

QUEEN.

Yes, appointed — so I hear.

MARQUIS.

The king cannot retract: — we know the king.
This much is clear, the prince must not remain
Here in Madrid, nor Flanders be abandon'd.

QUEEN.

And can you hinder it?

MARQUIS.

Perhaps I can,
But then the means are dangerous as the evil —
Rash as despair — and yet I know no other.

QUEEN.

Name them.

MARQUIS.

To you, and you alone, my queen,
Will I reveal them: for from you alone
Carlos will hear them named without a shudder.
The name they bear is somewhat harsh.

QUEEN.

Rebellion!

MARQUIS.

He must prove faithless to the king, and fly
With secrecy to Brussels, where the Flemings
Wait him with open arms. The Netherlands
Will rise at his command. Our glorious cause
From the king's son will gather matchless strength.
The Spanish throne shall tremble at his arms,
And what his sire denied him in Madrid,
That will he willingly concede in Brussels.

QUEEN.

You've spoken with the king to-day — and yet
Maintain all this.

MARQUIS.

Yes, I maintain it all,
Because I spoke with him.

QUEEN (*after a pause*).

The daring plan
Alarms and pleases me. You may be right —
The thought is bold, and that perhaps enchants me.
Let it but ripen. Does Prince Carlos know it?

MARQUIS.

It was my wish that he should hear it first
From your own lips.

QUEEN.

The plan is doubtless good,
But then the prince's youth —

MARQUIS.

No disadvantage!
He there will find the bravest generals
Of th' Emperor Charles — an Egmont and an Orange —
In battle daring, and in council wise.

QUEEN (*with vivacity*).

True — the design is grand and beautiful!
The prince must act: I feel it sensibly.
The part he's doom'd to play here in Madrid
Has bow'd me to the dust on his account.
I promise him the aid of France and Savoy;
I think with you, lord marquis — he must act —
But this design needs money —

MARQUIS.

It is ready.

QUEEN.

I, too, know means.

MARQUIS.

May I then give him hopes
Of seeing you?

QUEEN.

I will consider it.

MARQUIS.

The prince, my queen, is urgent for an answer;
I promised to procure it.
[*Presenting his writing-tablet to the* QUEEN.
Two short lines
Will be enough.

QUEEN (*after she has written*).

When do we meet again?

MARQUIS.

Whene'er you wish.

QUEEN.

Whene'er I wish it, marquis!
How can I understand this privilege?

MARQUIS.

As innocently, queen, as e'er you may.
But we enjoy it — that is sure enough.

QUEEN (*interrupting*).

How will my heart rejoice, should this become
A refuge for the liberties of Europe,
And this through *him!* Count on my silent aid!

MARQUIS (*with animation*).

Right well I knew your heart would understand me.
[*The* DUCHESS OLIVAREZ *enters.*

QUEEN (*coldly to the* MARQUIS).

My lord! the king's commands I shall respect
As law. Assure him of the queen's submission.
[*She makes a sign to him.* *Exit* MARQUIS.

Scene IV.

A Gallery.

Don Carlos, Count Lerma.

CARLOS.

Here we are undisturb'd. What would you now
Impart to me?

LERMA.

Your Highness had a friend
Here at the court.

CARLOS (*starting*).

A friend! I knew it not!
But what's your meaning?

LERMA.

I must sue for pardon
That I am learn'd in more than I should know.
But for your Highness' comfort, I've received it
From one I may depend upon, — in short,
I have it from *myself*.

CARLOS.

Whom speak you of?

LERMA.

The Marquis Posa.

CARLOS.

What!

LERMA.

And if your Highness
Has trusted to him more of what concerns you

Than every one should know, as I am led
To fear —

CARLOS.

You fear!

LERMA.

He has been with the king.

CARLOS.

Indeed!

LERMA.

Two hours in secret converse too.

CARLOS.

Indeed!

LERMA.

The subject was no trifling matter.

CARLOS.

That I can well believe.

LERMA.

And several times
I heard your name.

CARLOS.

That's no bad sign, I hope.

LERMA.

And then, this morning, in the king's apartment,
The queen was spoken of mysteriously.

CARLOS (*starts back astonished*).

Count Lerma!

LERMA.

When the marquis had retired,
I was commanded to admit his lordship,
In future, unannounced.

CARLOS.

Astonishing!

LERMA.

And without precedent, do I believe,
Long as I've served the king —

CARLOS.

'Tis strange, indeed!
How did you say the queen was spoken of?

LERMA (*steps back*).

No, no, my prince! — that were against my duty.

CARLOS.

'Tis somewhat strange! One secret you impart,
The other you withhold.

LERMA.

The first was due
To you, the other to the king.

CARLOS.

You're right.

LERMA.

And still I've thought you, prince, a man of honour.

CARLOS.

Then you have judged me truly.

LERMA.

But all virtue
Is spotless till it's tried.

CARLOS.

Some stand the trial.

LERMA.

A powerful monarch's favour is a prize
Worth seeking for; and this alluring bait
Has ruin'd many a virtue.

CARLOS.

Truly said!

LERMA.

And oftentimes 'tis prudent to discover
What scarce can longer be conceal'd.

CARLOS.

Yes, prudent
It may be, but you say you've ever known
The marquis prove himself a man of honour.

LERMA.

And if he be so still, my fears are harmless,
And you become a double gainer, prince. [*Going.*

CARLOS (*follows him with emotion, and presses his hand*).

Trebly I gain, upright and worthy man,
I gain another friend, nor lose the one
Whom I before possess'd. [*Exit* LERMA.

Scene V.

Marquis Posa *comes through the Gallery.* Carlos.

MARQUIS.

Carlos! My Carlos!

CARLOS.

Who calls me? Ah! 'tis thou — I was in haste
To gain the convent. You will not delay. [*Going.*

MARQUIS.

Hold! for a moment.

CARLOS.

We may be observed.

MARQUIS.

No chance of that. 'Tis over now. The queen —

CARLOS.

You've seen my father.

MARQUIS.

Yes! — he sent for me.

CARLOS (*full of expectation*).

Well!

MARQUIS.

'Tis all settled — You may see the queen.

CARLOS.

Yes! but the king! What said the king to you?

MARQUIS.

Not much. Mere curiosity to learn
My history. The zeal of unknown friends —
I know not what. He offered me employment.

CARLOS.

Which you, of course, rejected?

MARQUIS.

Yes, of course!

CARLOS.

How did you separate?

MARQUIS.

O well enough!

CARLOS.

And as I mentioned?

MARQUIS.

Yes; in general terms.
[*Taking out a pocket-book and giving it to the* PRINCE.
See, here are two lines written by the queen.
To-morrow I will settle where and how.

CARLOS (*reads it carelessly, puts the tablet in his pocket, and is going*).

You'll meet me at the prior's?

MARQUIS.

Yes! But stay —
Why in such haste? No one is coming hither.

CARLOS (*with a forced smile*).

Have we in truth changed characters? To-day
You seem so bold and confident.

MARQUIS.

To-day, —
Wherefore to-day?

CARLOS.

What writes the queen to me?

MARQUIS.

Have you not read this instant?

CARLOS.

I? Oh, yes.

MARQUIS.

What is't disturbs you now?

CARLOS (*reads the tablet again, delighted and fervently*).

Angel of Heaven!
I will be so, — I will be worthy of thee.
Love elevates great minds. So come what may,
Whatever thou commandest, I'll perform.
She writes that I must hold myself prepared
For a great enterprise! What can she mean?
Dost thou not know?

MARQUIS.

And, Carlos, if I knew,
Say, art thou now prepared to hear it from me?

CARLOS.

Have I offended thee? I was distracted —
Roderigo, pardon me.

MARQUIS.

Distracted! How?

CARLOS.

I scarcely know! But may I keep this tablet?

MARQUIS.

Not so! I came to ask thee for thine own.

CARLOS.

My tablet! Why?

MARQUIS.

And whatsoever writings
You have, unfit to meet a stranger's eye —
Letters or memorandums, and, in short,
Your whole portfolio.

CARLOS.

Why?

MARQUIS.

That we may be
Prepared for accidents. Who can prevent
Surprise? They'll never seek them in my keeping.
Here give them to me —

CARLOS (*uneasy*).

Strange! What can it mean?

MARQUIS.

Be not alarmed! 'Tis nothing of importance!
A mere precaution to prevent surprise.
You need not be alarmed!

CARLOS (*gives him the portfolio*).

Be careful of it.

MARQUIS.

Be sure I will.

CARLOS (*looks at him significantly*).

I give thee much, Roderigo! —

MARQUIS.

Not more than I have often had from thee.
The rest we'll talk of yonder. Now farewell. [*Going.*

CARLOS (*struggling with himself, then calls him back*).

Give me my letters back — there's one amongst them
The queen addressed to me at Alcala,
When I was sick to death. Still next my heart
I carry it — to take this letter from me
Goes to my very soul. But leave me that,
And take the rest.

[*He takes it out, and returns the portfolio.*

MARQUIS.

I yield unwillingly —
For t'was that letter which I most requir'd.

CARLOS.

Farewell!

[*He goes away slowly, stops a moment at the door, turns back again, and brings him the letter.*

You have it there.

[*His hand trembles, tears start from his eyes, he falls on the neck of the* MARQUIS, *and presses his face to his bosom.*

O not my father
Could do so much, Roderigo! Not my father!
[*Exit hastily.*

Scene VI.

MARQUIS (*looks after him with astonishment*).

And is this possible! And to this hour
Have I not known him fully? In his heart
This blemish has escaped my eye. Distrust
Of me — his friend! But no, 'tis calumny!
What hath he done, that I accuse him thus
Of weakest weakness. I myself commit
The fault I charge on him. What I have done
Might well surprise him! When hath he displayed
To his best friend such absolute reserve?
Carlos, I must afflict thee — there's no help —
And longer still distress thy noble soul.
In me the king has placed his confidence,
His holiest trust reposed — as in a casket,
And this reliance calls for gratitude.
How can disclosure serve thee, when my silence
Brings thee no harm — serves thee, perhaps? Ah! Why
Point to the traveller the impending storm?
Enough, if I direct its anger past thee! —
And when thou wak'st, the sky's again serene. [*Exit.*

Scene VII.

The King's *Cabinet.*

The King *seated, near him the* Infanta Clara Eugenia.

KING (*after a deep silence*).

No — she is sure my daughter — or can nature
Thus lie like truth! Yes, that blue eye is mine!
And I am pictured in thy ev'ry feature —
Child of my love! for such thou art — I fold thee
Thus to my heart — thou art my blood —
[*Starts and pauses.*
My blood —
What's worse to fear? Are not my features his?
[*Takes the miniature in his hand and looks first at the portrait, then at the mirror opposite, at last he throws it on the ground, rises hastily, and pushes the* Infanta *from him.*
Away, away! I'm lost in this abyss.

Scene VIII.

Count Lerma *and the* King.

LERMA.

Her Majesty is in the antechamber.

KING.

What! Now?

LERMA.

And begs the favour of an audience.

KING.

Now! At this unaccustomed hour! Not now—
I cannot see her yet.

LERMA.

Here comes the queen.

[*Exit* LERMA.

SCENE IX.

The KING; *the* QUEEN *enters, and the* INFANTA.

The INFANTA *runs to meet the* QUEEN *and clings to her; the* QUEEN *falls at the* KING'S *feet, who is silent, and appears confused and embarrassed.*

QUEEN.

My lord! My husband! I'm constrained to seek
Justice before the throne!

KING.

What! Justice!

QUEEN.

Yes!
I'm treated with dishonour at the court!
My casket has been rifled.

KING.

What! Your casket?

QUEEN.

And things I highly value have been plunder'd.

KING.

Things that you highly value?

QUEEN.

From the meaning
Which ignorant men's officiousness, perhaps,
Might give to them —

KING.

What's this? Officiousness,
And meaning! How? But rise.

QUEEN.

Oh no, my husband!
Not till you bind yourself, by sacred promise,
By virtue of your own authority,
To find th' offender out, and grant redress,
Or else dismiss my suite, which hides a thief.

KING.

But rise! — In such a posture! — Pray you rise.

QUEEN (*rises*).

'Tis some one of distinction — I know well;
My casket held both diamonds and pearls
Of matchless value, but he only took
My letters.

KING.

May I ask —

QUEEN.

Undoubtedly,
My husband. They were letters from the prince:
His miniature as well.

KING.

From whom?

QUEEN.

The prince,
Your son.

KING.

To you?

QUEEN.

Sent by the prince to me.

KING.

What! From Prince Carlos! Do you tell me that?

QUEEN.

Why not tell you, my husband?

KING.

And not blush?

QUEEN.

What mean you? You must surely recollect
The letters Carlos sent me to St. Germains,
With both courts' full consent. Whether that leave
Extended to the portrait, or alone
His hasty hope dictated such a step,
I cannot now pretend to answer; but
If even rash, it may at least be pardon'd,
For thus much I may be his pledge — that then
He never thought the gift was for his mother.
[*Observes the agitation of the* KING.
What moves you? What's the matter?

INFANTA (*who has found the miniature on the ground, and has been playing with it, brings it to the* QUEEN).

Look, dear mother!
See what a pretty picture.

QUEEN.

What then my —

[*She recognises the miniature, and remains in speechless astonishment. They both gaze at each other.—After a long pause:*

In truth, this mode of trying a wife's heart
Is great and royal, Sire! But I should wish
To ask one question?

KING.

'Tis for me to question.

QUEEN.

Let my suspicions spare the innocent,
And if by your command this theft was done —

KING.

It was so done!

QUEEN.

Then I have none to blame,
And none to pity — other than yourself —
Since you possess a wife on whom such schemes
Are thrown away.

KING.

This language is not new —
Nor shall you, madam, now again deceive me
As in the gardens of Aranjuez —
My queen of angel-purity, who then
So haughtily my accusation spurn'd —
I know her better now.

QUEEN.

What mean you, Sire?

KING.

Madam! thus briefly and without reserve —
Say is it true? — still true, that you conversed
With no one there? Is really that the truth?

QUEEN.

I spoke there with the prince.

KING.

Then is it clear
As day! So daring! — heedless of mine honour!

QUEEN.

Your honour, Sire! If that be now the question,
A greater honour is, methinks, at stake
Than Castille ever brought me as a dowry.

KING.

Why did you then deny the prince's presence?

QUEEN.

Because I'm not accustomed to be question'd,
Like a delinquent, before all your courtiers;
I never shall deny the truth, when ask'd
With kindness and respect. Was that the tone
Your Majesty used toward me in Aranjuez?
Are your assembled grandees the tribunal
Queens must account to for their private conduct?
I gave the prince the interview he sought
With earnest prayer, because, my liege and lord,
I — the queen — wish'd and will'd it, and because
I never can admit that formal custom
Should sit as judge on actions that are guiltless.
And I conceal'd it from your Majesty,

Because I chose not to contend with you,
About this right, in presence of your courtiers.

KING.

You speak with boldness, madam!

QUEEN.

I may add,
Because the prince, in his own father's heart,
Scarce finds that kindness he so well deserves.

KING.

So well deserves!

QUEEN.

Why, Sire! should I conceal it?
Highly do I esteem him — yes! and love him
As a most dear relation, who was once
Deem'd worthy of a dearer — tenderer — title.
I've yet to learn, that he, on this account,
Should be estrang'd from me, beyond all others, —
Because he once was better loved than they.
Though your state policy may knit together
What bands it pleases — 'tis a harder task
To burst such ties! I will not hate another
For any one's command — and since I must
So speak — such dictates I will not endure.

KING.

Elizabeth! you've seen me in weak moments —
And their remembrance now emboldens you.
On that strong influence you now depend,
Which you have often, with so much success,
Against my firmness tried. But fear the more!
The power which has seduced me to be weak
May yet inflame me to some act of madness.

QUEEN.

What have I done?

KING (*takes her hand*).

If it should prove but so —
And is it not already? If the full
Accumulated measure of your guilt
Become but one breath heavier — should I be
Deceived — [*Lets her hand go.*
I can subdue these last remains
Of weakness — can and will — then woe betide
Myself and you, Elizabeth!

QUEEN.

What crime
Have I committed?

KING.

On my own account then
Shall blood be shed.

QUEEN.

And has it come to this?
O Heaven!

KING.

I shall forget myself — I shall
Regard no usage and no voice of nature —
Not e'en the law of nations.

QUEEN.

O how much
I pity you!

KING.

The pity of a harlot!

INFANTA (*clinging to her mother in terror*).

The king is angry, and my mother weeps.
[KING *pushes the child violently from the* QUEEN.

QUEEN (*with mildness and dignity, but with faltering voice*).

This child I must protect from cruelty —
Come with me, daughter. [*Takes her in her arms.*
If the king no more
Acknowledge thee — beyond the Pyrenees
I'll call protectors to defend our cause. [*Going.*

KING (*embarrassed*).

Queen!

QUEEN

I can bear no more — it is too much!
[*Hastening to the door, she falls with her child on the threshold.*

KING (*running to her assistance*).

Heavens! What is that?

INFANTA (*cries out with terror*).

She bleeds! My mother bleeds!
[*Runs out.*

KING (*anxiously assisting her*).

O, what a fearful accident! You bleed:
Do I deserve this cruel punishment?
Rise and collect yourself — Rise, they are coming!
They will surprise us! — Shall the assembled court
Divert themselves with such a spectacle?
Must I entreat you? — Rise!
[*She rises, supported by the* KING.

SCENE X.

The former; ALVA, DOMINGO *entering alarmed, Ladies follow.*

KING.

Now let the queen
Be led to her apartment; she's unwell.

[*Exit the* QUEEN, *attended by her Ladies.* ALVA *and* DOMINGO *come forward.*

ALVA.

The queen in tears, and blood upon her face!

KING.

Does that surprise the devils who've misled me?

ALVA *and* DOMINGO.

We?

KING.

You, who have said enough to drive me mad,
But nothing to convince me.

ALVA.

We gave you
What we ourselves possessed.

KING.

May Hell reward you!
I've done what I repent of! Ah! was hers
The language of a conscience dark with guilt?

MARQUIS POSA (*from without*).

Say, can I see the king?

Scene XI.

The former; Marquis Posa.

KING (*starts up at the sound of his voice, and advances some paces to meet him*).

Ah! here he comes. —
Right welcome, marquis! Duke! I need you now
No longer. Leave us.

[Alva *and* Domingo *look at each other with silent astonishment and retire.*

Scene XII.

The King, *and* Marquis Posa.

MARQUIS.

That old soldier, Sire,
Who has faced death, in twenty battles, for you,
Must hold it thankless to be so dismiss'd.

KING.

'Tis thus for you to think — for me to act;
In a few hours, you have been more to me,
Than that man, in a lifetime. Nor shall I
Keep my content a secret. On your brow
The lustre of my high and royal favour
Shall shine resplendent — I will make that man
A mark for envy, whom I choose my friend.

MARQUIS.

What if the veil of dark obscurity
Were his sole claim to merit such a title?

KING.

What come you now to tell me?

MARQUIS.

As I pass'd
Along the antechamber, a dread rumour
Fell on my ear, — it seemed incredible, —
Of a most angry quarrel — blood — the queen —

KING.

Come you from her?

MARQUIS.

I should be horrified
Were not the rumour false: or should perhaps
Your Majesty meantime have done some act —
Discoveries of importance I have made,
Which wholly change the aspect of affairs.

KING.

How, now?

MARQUIS.

I found an opportunity
To seize your son's portfolio, with his letters.
Which, as I hope, may throw some light —
[*He gives the* PRINCE'S *portfolio to the* KING.

KING (*looks through it eagerly*).

A letter
From the emperor, my father. How! a letter
Of which I ne'er remember to have heard.
[*He reads it through, puts it aside, and goes to the other papers.*
A drawing of some fortress — detach'd thoughts

From Tacitus — and what is here? The hand
I surely recognise — it is a lady's.
[*He reads it attentively, partly to himself, and partly aloud.*
"This key — the farthest chamber of the queen's
Pavilion!" — Ha! what's this? — "The voice of love, —
The timid lover — may — a rich reward." —
Satanic treachery! I see it now.
'Tis she — 'tis her own writing!

MARQUIS.

The queen's writing!
Impossible! —

KING.

The Princess Eboli's.

MARQUIS.

Then, it was true, what the queen's page confess'd,
Not long since — that he brought this key and letter.

KING (*grasping the* MARQUIS'S *hand in great emotion*).

Marquis! I see that I'm in dreadful hands.
This woman — I confess it — 'twas this woman
Forced the queen's casket; and my first suspicions
Were breathed by her. Who knows how deep the priest
May be engaged in this? I am deceived
By cursed villainy.

MARQUIS.

Then was it lucky —

KING.

Marquis! O marquis! I begin to fear
I've wrong'd my wife.

MARQUIS.

If there exist, between
The prince and queen, some secret understandings,
They are of other import, rest assured,
Than those they charge her with. I know, for certain,
The prince's prayer to be despatched to Flanders
Was by the queen suggested.

KING.

I have thought so.

MARQUIS.

The queen's ambitious. Dare I speak more fully?
She sees, with some resentment, her high hopes
All disappointed, and herself shut out
From share of empire. Your son's youthful ardour
Offers itself to her far-reaching views.
Her heart! — I doubt if she can love.

KING.

Her schemes
Of policy can never make me tremble.

MARQUIS.

Whether the Infant loves her, — whether we
Have something worse to fear from him, — are things
Worthy our deep attention. To these points
Our strictest vigilance must be directed.

KING.

You must be pledge for him.

MARQUIS.

And if the king
Esteem me capable of such a task,

I must entreat it be entrusted to me
Wholly without conditions.

KING.

So it shall.

MARQUIS.

That in the steps which I may think required,
I may be thwarted by no coadjutors,
Whatever name they bear.

KING.

I pledge my word
You shall not. You have proved my guardian angel.
How many thanks I owe you for this service!
[LERMA *enters — the* KING *to him.*
How did you leave the queen?

LERMA.

But scarce recover'd
From her deep swoon.
[*He looks at the* MARQUIS *doubtfully and exit.*

MARQUIS (*to the* KING, *after a pause*).

One caution yet seems needful.
The prince may be advised of our design,
For he has many faithful friends in Ghent,
And may have partisans among the rebels.
Fear may incite to desperate resolves;
Therefore I counsel, that some speedy means
Be taken, to prevent this fatal chance.

KING.

You are quite right — but how?

MARQUIS.

Your Majesty
May sign a secret warrant of arrest,
And place it in my hands, to be employed,
As may seem needful, in the hour of danger.
[*The* KING *appears thoughtful.*
This step must be a most profound state-secret
Until —

KING (*going to his desk and writing the warrant of arrest*).

The kingdom is at stake, and now
The pressing danger sanctions urgent measures.
Here, marquis! I need scarcely say — use prudence.

MARQUIS (*taking the warrant*).

'Tis only for the last extremity.

KING (*laying his hand on the shoulder of the* MARQUIS).

Go! Go, dear marquis! Give this bosom peace,
And bring back slumber to my sleepless pillow.
[*Exeunt at different sides.*

SCENE XIII.

A Gallery.

CARLOS, *entering in extreme agitation,* COUNT LERMA *meeting him.*

CARLOS.

I have been seeking you.

LERMA.

And I, your Highness.

CARLOS.

For heaven's sake, is it true?

LERMA.

What do you mean?

CARLOS.

That the king drew his dagger — and that she
Was borne, all bathed in blood, from the apartment?
Now answer me, by all that's sacred — say
What am I to believe? What truth is in it?

LERMA.

She fainted, and so grazed her skin in falling.
That is the whole.

CARLOS.

Is there no further danger?
Count! answer on your honour.

LERMA.

For the queen
No further danger — for yourself there's much!

CARLOS.

None for my mother! Then, kind Heaven, I thank thee.
A dreadful rumour reached me, that the king
Raved against child and mother, and that some
Dire secret was discover'd.

LERMA.

And the last
May possibly be true.

CARLOS.

Be true! What mean you?

LERMA.

One warning have I given you, prince, already,
And that to-day, — but you despised it, — now
Perhaps you'll profit better by a second.

CARLOS.

Explain yourself.

LERMA.

If I mistake not, prince,
A few days since, I noticed in your hands
An azure-blue portfolio, work'd in velvet
And chased with gold.

CARLOS (*with anxiety*).

Yes! I had such a one.

LERMA.

And on the cover — if I recollect —
A portrait set in pearls?

CARLOS.

'Tis right — go on.

LERMA.

I enter'd the king's chamber on a sudden,
And in his hands I mark'd that same portfolio,
The Marquis Posa standing by his side.

CARLOS (*after a short silence of astonishment, hastily*).

'Tis false.

LERMA (*warmly*).

Then I'm a traitor!

CARLOS (*looking steadfastly at him*).

That you are!

LERMA.

Well! I forgive you.

CARLOS (*paces the apartment in extreme agitation, at length stands still before him*).

Has he injured thee?
What have our guiltless ties of friendship done,
That with a demon's zeal thou triest to rend them?

LERMA.

Prince! I respect the grief which renders you
So far unjust.

CARLOS.

Heav'n shield me from suspicion!

LERMA.

And I remember, too, the king's own words.
Just as I enter'd, he address'd the marquis:
"How many thanks I owe you for this news."

CARLOS.

O say no more!

LERMA.

Duke Alva is disgraced!
The great seal taken from the Prince Ruy Gomez,
And given to the marquis.

CARLOS (*lost in deep thought*).

And from me
Has he conceal'd all this? And why from me?

LERMA.

As minister all-powerful, the court
Looks on him now — as favourite unrivall'd!

CARLOS.

He lov'd me — lov'd me greatly: I was dear,
As his own soul is, to him. That I know —
Of that I've had a thousand proofs. But should
The happiness of millions yield to one?
Must not his country dearer to him prove
Than Carlos? One friend only is too few
For his capacious heart. And not enough
Is Carlos' happiness to engross his love.
He offers me a sacrifice to virtue;
And shall I murmur at him? Now 'tis certain,
I have for ever lost him.
[*He steps aside and covers his face.*

LERMA.

Dearest prince!
How can I serve you?

CARLOS (*without looking at him*).

Get you to the king;
Go and betray me. I have naught to give.

LERMA.

Will you then stay and brave the ill that follows?

CARLOS (*leans on the balustrade and looks forward with a vacant gaze*).

I've lost him now, and I am destitute!

LERMA (*approaching him with sympathising emotion*).

And will you not consult your safety, prince?

CARLOS.

My safety! Generous man!

LERMA.

And is there, then,
No other person you should tremble for?

CARLOS (*starts up*).

Heavens! you remind me now. Alas! My mother!
The letter that I gave him — first refused —
Then after gave him!
[*He paces backwards and forwards with agitation, wringing his hands.*
Has she then deserved
This blow from him? He should have spared her, Lerma.
[*In a hasty, determined tone.*
But I must see her — warn her of her danger —
I must prepare her — Lerma, dearest Lerma!
Whom shall I send? Have I no friend remaining?
Yes! Heaven be praised! I still have one; and now
The worst is over. [*Exit quickly.*

LERMA (*follows and calls after him*).

Whither, whither, prince?

Scene XIV.

The Queen, Alva, Domingo.

ALVA.

If we may be permitted, gracious queen —

QUEEN.

What are your wishes?

DOMINGO.

A most true regard
For your high Majesty, forbids us now
To watch in careless silence, an event
Pregnant with danger to your royal safety.

ALVA.

We hasten, by a kind and timely warning,
To counteract a plot that's laid against you.

DOMINGO.

And our warm zeal, and our best services,
To lay before your feet, most gracious queen!

QUEEN (*looking at them with astonishment*).

Most reverend sir, and you, my noble duke,
You much surprise me. Such sincere attachment,
In truth, I had not hoped for from Domingo,
Nor from Duke Alva. — Much I value it.
A plot you mention, menacing my safety —
Dare I inquire by whom —

ALVA.

We must entreat
You will beware a certain Marquis Posa.
He has, of late, been secretly employ'd
In the king's service.

QUEEN.

With delight I hear
The king has made so excellent a choice.
Report, long since, has spoken of the marquis,
As a deserving, great, and virtuous man —
The royal grace was ne'er so well bestow'd!

DOMINGO.

So well bestowed! We think far otherwise.

ALVA.

It is no secret now, for what designs
This man has been employ'd.

QUEEN.

How! What designs?
You put my expectation on the rack.

DOMINGO.

How long is it, since last your Majesty
Open'd your casket?

QUEEN.

Why do you inquire?

DOMINGO.

Did you not miss some articles of value?

QUEEN.

Why these suspicions? What I missed was then
Known to the court! But what of Marquis Posa?
Say, what connection has all this with him?

ALVA.

The closest, please your Majesty — the prince
Has also lost some papers of importance;
And they were seen, this morning, with the king,
After the marquis had an audience of him.

QUEEN (*after some consideration*).

This news is strange indeed — inexplicable —
To find a foe, where I could ne'er have dream'd it,
And two warm friends, I knew not I possess'd!
[*Fixing her eyes steadfastly upon them.*
And, to speak truth, I had well-nigh imputed
To you, the wicked turn my husband served me.

ALVA.

To us!

QUEEN.

To you yourselves!

DOMINGO.

To us! Duke Alva!

QUEEN (*her eyes still fastened on them*).

I am glad to be, so timely, made aware
Of my rash judgment, — else had I resolved
This very day, to beg his Majesty
Would bring me face to face with my accusers.
But I'm contented now. I can appeal
To the Duke Alva, for his testimony.

ALVA.

For mine? You would not sure do that?

QUEEN.

Why not?

ALVA.

'Twould counteract the services we might
Render, in secret, to you.

QUEEN.

How! in secret?

[*With stern dignity.*

I fain would know what secret projects, duke,
Your sovereign's spouse can have to form with you,
Or, priest! with you — her husband should not know?
Think you that I am innocent, or guilty?

DOMINGO.

Strange question!

ALVA.

Should the monarch prove unjust —
And, at this time —

QUEEN.

Then I must wait for justice
Until it come — and they are happiest far
Whose consciences may calmly wait their right.

[*Bows to them and exit.* DOMINGO *and* ALVA *exeunt on the opposite side.*

Scene XV.

Chamber of Princess Eboli.

Princess Eboli. Carlos *immediately after.*

EBOLI.

Is it then true — the strange intelligence
That fills the court with wonder?

CARLOS (*enters*).

Do not fear,
Princess! I shall be gentle as a child.

EBOLI.

Prince, this intrusion!

CARLOS.

Are you angry still?
Offended still with me —

EBOLI.

Prince!

CARLOS (*earnestly*).

Are you angry?
I pray you answer me.

EBOLI.

What can this mean?
You seem, prince, to forget — what would you with me?

CARLOS (*seizing her hand with warmth*).

Dear maiden! Can you hate eternally?
Can injured love ne'er pardon?

EBOLI (*disengaging herself*).

Prince! of what
Would you remind me?

CARLOS.

Of your kindness, dearest!
And of my deep ingratitude. Alas,
Too well I know it! deeply have I wronged thee,
Wounded thy tender heart, and from thine eyes,
Thine angel eyes, wrung precious tears, sweet maid!
But ah! 'tis not repentance leads me hither.

EBOLI.

Prince! leave me — I —

CARLOS.

I come to thee, because
Thou art a maid of gentle soul — because
I trust thy heart — thy kind and tender heart.
Think, dearest maiden! think, I have no friend,
No friend but thee, in all this wretched world —
Thou who wert once so kind wilt not for ever
Hate me, nor will thine anger prove eternal.

EBOLI (*turning away her face*).

O, cease! No more! For Heaven's sake! leave me, prince.

CARLOS.

Let me remind thee of those golden hours —
Let me remind thee of thy love, sweet maid —
That love which I so basely have offended!
O let me now appear to thee again
As once I was — and as thy heart portrayed me
Yet once again, once only, place my image,
As in days past, before thy tender soul,

And to that idol, make a sacrifice
Thou canst not make to me.

EBOLI.

O, Carlos, cease.
Too cruelly thou sportest with my feelings!

CARLOS.

Be nobler than thy sex! Forgive an insult!
Do what no woman e'er has done before thee,
And what no woman, after thee, can equal.
I ask of thee an unexampled favour.
Grant me — upon my knees I ask it of thee —
Grant me two moments with the queen, my mother!
[*He casts himself at her feet.*

Scene XVI.

The former. Marquis Posa *rushes in: behind him two Officers of the Queen's Guard.*

MARQUIS (*breathless and agitated, rushing between* CARLOS *and the* PRINCESS).

Say, what has he confess'd? Believe him not!

CARLOS (*still on his knees, with loud voice*).

By all that's holy —

MARQUIS (*interrupting him with vehemence*).

He is mad! He raves!
O listen to him not!

CARLOS (*louder and more urgent*).

It is a question
Of life and death, conduct me to her straight.

MARQUIS (*dragging the* PRINCESS *from him by force*).

You die, if you but listen.
[*To one of the Officers, showing an order.*
Count of Cordova!
In the king's name, Prince Carlos is your prisoner.
[CARLOS *stands bewildered. The* PRINCESS *utters a cry of horror and tries to escape. The officers are astounded. — A long and deep pause ensues. The* MARQUIS *trembles violently, and with difficulty preserves his composure.*
[*To the* PRINCE.
I beg your sword. — The Princess Eboli
Remains — [*To the Officers.*
And you, on peril of your lives,
Let no one with his Highness speak — no person —
Not e'en yourselves.
[*He whispers a few words to one Officer, then turns to the other.*
I hasten, instantly,
To cast myself before our monarch's feet,
And justify this step — [*To the* PRINCE.
And prince! for you —
Expect me in an hour.
[CARLOS *permits himself to be led away without any signs of consciousness, except that, in passing, he casts a languid, dying look on the* MARQUIS. *The* PRINCESS *endeavours again to escape: the* MARQUIS *pulls her back by the arm.*

Scene XVII.

Princess Eboli, Marquis Posa.

EBOLI.

For Heaven's sake let me leave this place —

MARQUIS (*leads her forward: with dreadful earnestness*).

Thou wretch!
What has he said to thee?

EBOLI.

O leave me! Nothing!

MARQUIS (*with earnestness: holding her back by force*).

How much has he imparted to thee? Here
No way is left thee to escape. To none,
In this world, shalt thou ever tell it.

EBOLI (*looking at him with terror*).

Heavens!
What would you do? Would you then murder me?

MARQUIS (*drawing a dagger*).

Yes! that is my resolve! Be speedy!

EBOLI.

Mercy!
What have I then committed?

MARQUIS (*looking toward heaven, points the dagger to her breast*).

Still there's time —
The poison has not issued from these lips.

Dash but the bowl to atoms, all remains
Still as before! The destinies of Spain
Against a woman's life!
[*Remains doubtingly in this position.*

EBOLI (*having sunk down beside him, looks in his face*).

Do not delay —
Why do you hesitate? I beg no mercy —
I have deserved to die, and I am ready.

MARQUIS (*letting his hand drop slowly — after some reflection*).

It were as cowardly as barbarous.
No! God be praised! — another way is left.
[*He lets the dagger fall and hurries out. The* PRINCESS *hastens out through another door.*

SCENE XVIII.

A Chamber of the Queen.

The QUEEN *to the* COUNTESS FUENTES.

What means this noisy tumult in the palace?
Each breath to-day alarms me! Countess! see
What it portends, and hasten back with speed.
[*Exit* COUNTESS FUENTES — *The* PRINCESS EBOLI *rushes in.*

Scene XIX.

The Queen, Princess Eboli.

EBOLI (*breathless, pale, and wild, falls before the* QUEEN).

Help! Help! O queen! he's seized!

QUEEN.

Who?

EBOLI.

He's arrested.
By the king's orders given to Marquis Posa.

QUEEN.

Who is arrested? Who?

EBOLI.

The prince!

QUEEN.

Thou rav'st!

EBOLI.

This moment they are leading him away.

QUEEN.

And who arrested him?

EBOLI.

The Marquis Posa.

QUEEN.

Then Heaven be praised, it was the marquis seized
him!

EBOLI.

Can you speak thus, and with such tranquil mien?
O Heavens! you do not know — you cannot think —

QUEEN.

The cause of his arrest! — some trifling error,
Doubtless arising from his headlong youth!

EBOLI.

No! no! I know far better. No, my queen!
Remorseless treachery! There's no help for him.
He dies!

QUEEN.

He dies!

EBOLI.

And I'm his murderer!

QUEEN.

What! Dies? Thou ravest! Think what thou art
saying!

EBOLI.

And wherefore — wherefore dies he? Had I known
That it would come to this!

QUEEN (*takes her affectionately by the hand*).

O dearest princess,
Your senses are distracted, but collect
Your wandering spirits, and relate to me
More calmly, not in images of horror
That fright my inmost soul, whate'er you know.
Say, what has happened?

EBOLI.

O display not, queen,
Such heavenly condescension! Like hot flames
This kindness sears my conscience. I'm not worthy
To view thy purity with eyes profane.
O crush the wretch, who, agonised by shame,
Remorse, and self-reproach, writhes at thy feet!

QUEEN.

Unhappy woman! Say, what is thy guilt?

EBOLI.

Angel of light! Sweet saint! thou little know'st
The demon who has won thy loving smiles.
Know her to-day — I was the wretched thief
Who plunder'd thee!

QUEEN.

What! Thou?

EBOLI.

And gave thy letters
Up to the king!

QUEEN.

What! Thou?

EBOLI.

And dared accuse thee!

QUEEN.

Thou! Couldst thou this?

EBOLI.

Revenge and madness — love —
I hated thee, and loved the prince!

QUEEN.

And did
His love so prompt thee?

EBOLI.

I had own'd my love,
But met with no return.

QUEEN (*after a pause*).

Now all's explain'd!
Rise up! — you loved him — I have pardon'd you —
I have forgotten all. Now, princess, rise!
[*Holding out her hand to the* PRINCESS.

EBOLI.

No! no! a foul confession still remains.
I will not rise, great queen, till I —

QUEEN.

Then speak.
What have I yet to hear?

EBOLI.

The king! Seduction!
O! now you turn away! And in your eyes
I read abhorrence. Yes: of that foul crime
I charged you with, I have myself been guilty.
[*She presses her burning face to the ground. Exit* QUEEN. — *A long pause. The* COUNTESS OLIVAREZ, *after some minutes, comes out of the Cabinet, into which the* QUEEN *entered, and finds the* PRINCESS *still lying in the above posture. She approaches in silence. On hearing a noise the latter looks up and becomes like a mad person when she misses the* QUEEN.

Scene XX.

Princess Eboli, Countess Olivarez.

EBOLI.

Heavens! she has left me. I am now undone!

OLIVAREZ (*approaching her*).

My princess! — Eboli!

EBOLI.

I know your business,
Duchess, and you come hither from the queen,
To speak my sentence to me — do it quickly.

OLIVAREZ.

I am commanded, by her Majesty,
To take your cross and key.

EBOLI (*takes from her breast a golden cross, and gives it to the* Duchess).

And but once more
May I not kiss my gracious sovereign's hand?

OLIVAREZ.

In holy Mary's convent, shall you learn
Your fate, princess.

EBOLI (*with a flood of tears*).

Alas! then I no more
Shall ever see the queen!

OLIVAREZ (*embraces her with her face turned away*).

Princess, farewell!

[*She goes hastily away. The* PRINCESS *follows her as far as the door of the Cabinet, which is immediately locked after the* DUCHESS. *She remains a few minutes silent and motionless on her knees before it. She then rises and hastens away, covering her face.*

SCENE XXI.

QUEEN, MARQUIS POSA.

QUEEN.

Ah! marquis, I am glad you're come at last!

MARQUIS (*pale, with a disturbed countenance and trembling voice, in solemn, deep agitation, during the whole Scene*).

And is your Majesty alone? Can none
Within the adjoining chamber overhear us?

QUEEN.

No one! But why? What news would you impart?
[*Looking at him closely, and drawing back alarmed.*
And what has wrought this change in you? Speak, marquis!
You make me tremble — all your features seem
So mark'd with death!

MARQUIS.

You know, perhaps, already —

QUEEN.

That Carlos is arrested — and, they add,
By you! Is it then true? From no one else
Would I believe it, but yourself.

MARQUIS.

'Tis true.

QUEEN.

By you?

MARQUIS.

By me!

QUEEN (*looks at him for some time doubtingly*).

I still respect your actions
E'en when I comprehend them not. In this,
Pardon a timid woman! I much fear
You play a dangerous game.

MARQUIS.

And I have lost it.

QUEEN.

Merciful Heaven!

MARQUIS.

Queen, fear not. He is safe,
But I am lost myself.

QUEEN.

What do I hear?

MARQUIS.

Who bade me hazard all, on one chance throw?
All? And with rash, foolhardy confidence,
Sport with the power of Heaven? Of bounded mind,
Man, who is not omniscient, must not dare

To guide the helm of Destiny. — 'Tis just!
But why these thoughts of self? The hour is precious,
As life can be to man: — and who can tell
Whether the parsimonious hand of Fate
May not have measured my last drops of life?

QUEEN.

The hand of Fate! What means this solemn tone?
I understand these words not — but I shudder.

MARQUIS.

He's saved! — no matter at what price — he's saved!
But only for to-day, — a few short hours
Are his. O let him husband them! — This night
The prince must leave Madrid.

QUEEN.

This very night?

MARQUIS.

All measures are prepared. The post will meet him
At the Carthusian Convent, which has served
So long as an asylum to our friendship.
Here will he find, in letters of exchange,
All in the world that fortune gifts me with.
Should more be wanting, you must e'en supply it.
In truth, I have within my heart full much
To unburthen to my Carlos, — it may chance
I shall want leisure now, to tell him all
In person, — but this evening you will see him,
And therefore I address myself to you.

QUEEN.

O for my peace of mind, dear marquis, speak!
Explain yourself more clearly! Do not use

This dark, and fearful, and mysterious language!
Say, what has happened?

MARQUIS.

I have yet one thing,
A matter of importance, on my mind:
In your hands I deposit it. My lot
Was such as few indeed have e'er enjoy'd —
I lov'd a prince's son. My heart to one —
To that one object given — embraced the world!
I have created in my Carlos' soul
A paradise for millions! O my dream
Was lovely! — But the will of Providence
Has summon'd me away, before my hour,
From this my beauteous work. His Roderigo
Soon shall be his no more, and friendship's claim
Will be transferr'd to love. Here, therefore, here
Upon this sacred altar — on the heart
Of his loved queen — I lay my last bequest,
A precious legacy — he'll find it here,
When I shall be no more.

[*He turns away, his voice choked with grief.*

QUEEN.

This is the language
Of a dying man — it surely emanates
But from your blood's excitement — or does sense
Lie hidden in your language?

MARQUIS (*has endeavoured to collect himself, and continues in a solemn voice*).

Tell the prince
That he must ever bear in mind the oath
We swore, in past enthusiastic days,
Upon the Sacred Host. I have kept mine —
I'm true to him, till death — 'tis now his turn —

QUEEN.

Till death?

MARQUIS.

O bid him realise the dream,
The glowing vision which our friendship painted,
Of a new — perfect realm! And let him lay
The first hand on the rude unshapen'd stone.
Whether he fail or prosper — all alike —
Let him commence the work. When centuries
Have roll'd away, shall Providence again
Raise to the throne a princely youth like him,
And animate again a fav'rite son
Whose breast shall burn with like enthusiasm.
Tell him, in manhood, he must still revere
The dreams of early youth, nor ope the heart
Of Heaven's all-tender flower to canker-worms
Of boasted reason, — nor be led astray
When, by the wisdom of the dust, he hears
Enthusiasm, heavenly-born, blasphemed.
I have already told him.

QUEEN.

Whither, marquis?
Whither does all this tend?

MARQUIS.

And tell him farther
I lay upon his soul the happiness
Of man — that with my dying breath I claim,
Demand it of him — and with justest title.
I had design'd a new, a glorious morn,
To waken in these kingdoms: for to me
Philip had open'd all his inmost heart —
Call'd me his son — bestow'd his seals upon me —

And Alva was no more his counsellor.
[*He pauses, and looks at the* QUEEN *for a few moments in silence.*
You weep! — I know those tears, beloved soul!
O they are tears of joy! — but it is past —
For ever past! — Carlos or I? The choice
Was prompt and fearful. One of us must perish.
And I will be that one. O ask no more! —

QUEEN.

Now, now, at last, I comprehend your meaning.
Unhappy man! What have you done?

MARQUIS.

Cut off
Two transient hours of evening, to secure
A long bright summer day! I now give up
The king for ever. What were I to the king?
In such cold soil, no rose of mine could bloom;
In my great friend must Europe's fortune ripen;
Spain I bequeath to him, still bathed in blood,
From Philip's iron hand. But woe to him,
Woe to us both, if I have chosen wrong!
But no — O no! — I know my Carlos better —
'Twill never come to pass! — for this, my queen,
You stand my surety. [*After a silence.*
Yes! I saw his love
In its first blossom — saw his fatal passion
Take root in his young heart. I had full power
To check it; but I did not. The attachment
Which seem'd to me not guilty, I still nourish'd.
The world may censure me, but I repent not,
Nor does my heart accuse me. I saw life
Where death appear'd to others. In a flame
So hopeless, I discern'd Hope's golden beam.
I wish'd to lead him to the excellent —

To exalt him to the highest point of beauty.
Mortality denied a model to me,
And language, words. Then did I bend his views
To this point only — and my whole endeavour
Was to explain to him his love.

QUEEN.

Your friend,
Marquis! so wholly occupied your mind,
That for his cause you quite forgot my own —
Could you suppose that I had thrown aside
All woman's weaknesses, that you could dare
Make me his angel, and confide alone
In virtue, for his armour? You forget
What risk the heart must run, when we ennoble
Passion with such a beauteous name as this.

MARQUIS.

Yes, in all other women — but in one,
One only, 'tis not so.—For you, I swear it.
And should you blush t' indulge the pure desire
To call heroic virtue into life?
Can it affect King Philip, that his works
Of noblest art, in the Escurial, raise
Immortal longings in the painter's soul
Who stands entranced before them? Do the sounds
That slumber in the lute belong alone
To him who buys the chords? With ear unmoved
He may preserve his treasure: — he has bought
The wretched right to shiver it to atoms,
But not the power to wake its silver tones,
Or, in the magic of its sounds, dissolve.—
Truth is created for the sage, as beauty
Is for the feeling heart. They own each other;
And this belief no coward prejudice
Shall make me e'er disclaim. Then promise, queen,

That you will ever love him. That false shame,
Or fancied dignity, shall never make you
Yield to the voice of base dissimulation: —
That you will love him still unchanged, for ever.
Promise me this, O queen! Here solemnly
Say, do you promise?

QUEEN.

That my heart alone
Shall ever vindicate my love, I promise —

MARQUIS (*drawing his hand back*).

Now I die satisfied — my work is done.
[*He bows to the* QUEEN, *and is about to go.*

QUEEN (*follows him with her eyes in silence*).

You are then going, marquis, and have not
Told me how soon — and when — we meet again?

MARQUIS (*comes back once more, his face turned away*).

Yes, we shall surely meet again!

QUEEN.

Now, Posa,
I understand you. Why have you done this?

MARQUIS.

Carlos, or I myself!

QUEEN.

No! no! you rush
Headlong into a deed you deem sublime.
Do not deceive yourself: I know you well:
Long have you thirsted for it. If your pride
But have its fill, what matters it to you

Though thousand hearts should break. O! now, at length
I comprehend your feelings — 'tis the love
Of admiration which has won your heart —

MARQUIS (*surprised, aside*).

No! I was not prepared for this —

QUEEN (*after a pause*).

O marquis!
Is there no hope of preservation?

MARQUIS.

None.

QUEEN.

None? O consider well! None possible!
Not e'en by me?

MARQUIS.

None even, queen, by thee.

QUEEN.

You but half know me — I have courage, marquis —

MARQUIS.

I know it —

QUEEN.

And no means of safety?

MARQUIS.

None!

QUEEN (*turning away and covering her face*).

Go! Never more shall I respect a man —

MARQUIS (*casts himself on his knees before her in evident emotion*).

O queen! O Heaven! how lovely still is life!
[*He starts up and rushes out. The* QUEEN *retires into her Cabinet.*

SCENE XXII.

DUKE ALVA *and* DOMINGO *walking up and down in silence and separately.* COUNT LERMA *comes out of the* KING'S *Cabinet, and afterward* DON RAIMOND OF TAXIS, *the Postmaster General.*

LERMA.

Has not the marquis yet appeared?

ALVA.

Not yet.
[LERMA *about to reënter the Cabinet.*

TAXIS (*enters*).

Count Lerma! Pray announce me to the king?

LERMA.

His Majesty cannot be seen.

TAXIS.

But say
That I must see him: that my business is
Of urgent import to his Majesty.
Make haste — it will admit of no delay.
[LERMA *enters the Cabinet.*

ALVA.

Dear Taxis, you must learn a little patience —
You cannot see the king.

TAXIS.

Not see him! Why?

ALVA.

You should have been consid'rate and procured
Permission from the Marquis Posa first —
Who keeps both son and father in confinement.

TAXIS.

The Marquis Posa! Right — that is the man
From whom I bring this letter.

ALVA.

Ha! What letter?

TAXIS.

A letter to be forwarded to Brussels.

ALVA (*attentively*).

To Brussels?

TAXIS.

And I bring it to the king.

ALVA.

Indeed! to Brussels! Heard you that, Domingo?

DOMINGO (*joining them*).

Full of suspicion!

TAXIS.

And with anxious mien,
And deep embarrassment, he gave it to me.

DOMINGO.

Embarrassment! To whom is it directed?

TAXIS.

The Prince of Orange and Nassau.

ALVA.

To William!
There's treason here, Domingo!

DOMINGO.

Nothing less!
In truth this letter must, without delay,
Be laid before the king. A noble service
You render, worthy man — to be so firm
In the discharge of duty.

TAXIS.

Reverend sir!
'Tis but my duty.

ALVA.

But you do it well.

LERMA (*coming out of the Cabinet, addressing* TAXIS).

The king will see you. [TAXIS *goes in.*
Is the marquis come?

DOMINGO.

He has been sought for everywhere.

ALVA.

'Tis strange!
The prince is a state prisoner! And the king
Knows not the reason why!

DOMINGO.

He never came
To explain the business here.

ALVA.

What says the king?

LERMA.

The king spoke not a word. [*A noise in the Cabinet.*

ALVA.

What noise is that?

TAXIS (*coming out of the Cabinet*).

Count Lerma! [*Both enter.*

ALVA (*to* DOMINGO).

What so deeply can engage them?

DOMINGO.

That look of fear! — This intercepted letter!
It augurs nothing good.

ALVA.

He sends for Lerma!
Yet he must know full well, that you and I
Are both in waiting.

DOMINGO.

Ah! our day is over!

ALVA.

And am I not the same to whom these doors
Flew open once? But ah! how changed is all
Around me, and how strange!

[DOMINGO *approaches the Cabinet door softly and remains listening before it.*

ALVA (*after a pause*).

Hark! — All is still
And silent as the grave! I hear them breathe.

DOMINGO.

The double tapestry absorbs the sounds!

ALVA.

Away! there's some one coming. — All appears
So solemn and so still — as if this instant
Some deep momentous question were decided.

SCENE XXIII.

The PRINCE OF PARMA, *the* DUKES OF FERIA *and* MEDINA SIDONIA, *with other Grandees enter. The preceding.*

PARMA.

Say, can we see the king?

ALVA.

No!

PARMA.

Who is with him?

FERIA.

The Marquis Posa, doubtless?

ALVA.

Every instant
He is expected here.

PARMA.

This moment we
Arrive from Saragossa. Thro' Madrid
Terror prevails! Is the announcement true?

DOMINGO.

Alas, too true!

FERIA.

That he has been arrested
By the marquis!

ALVA.

Yes.

PARMA.

And wherefore? What's the cause?

ALVA.

Wherefore? That no one knows, except the king
And Marquis Posa.

PARMA.

And without the warrant
Of the assembled Cortes of the realm?

FERIA.

That man shall suffer who has lent a hand
To infringe the nation's rights.

ALVA.

And so say I!

MEDINA SIDONIA.

And I!

THE OTHER GRANDEES.

And all of us!

ALVA.

Who'll follow me
Into the cabinet? I'll throw myself
Before the monarch's feet.

LERMA (*rushing out of the Cabinet*).

The Duke of Alva!

DOMINGO.

Then God be praised at last!

LERMA.

When Marquis Posa
Comes, say the king's engaged and he'll be sent for.

DOMINGO (*to* LERMA; *all the others having gathered round him, full of anxious expectation*).

Count! What has happen'd? You are pale as death!

LERMA (*hastening away*).

Fell villainy!

PARMA *and* FERIA.

What! what!

MEDINA SIDONIA.

How is the king?

DOMINGO (*at the same time*).

Fell villainy! Explain —

LERMA.

The king shed tears!

DOMINGO.

Shed tears!

ALL (*together with astonishment*).

The king shed tears!

[*The bell rings in the Cabinet,* COUNT LERMA *hastens in.*

DOMINGO.

Count, yet one word.
Pardon! — He's gone! We're fetter'd in amazement.

SCENE XXIV.

PRINCESS EBOLI, FERIA, MEDINA SIDONIA, PARMA, DOMINGO *and other Grandees.*

EBOLI (*hurriedly and distractedly*).

Where is the king? Where? I must speak with him.
[*To* FERIA.
Conduct me to him, duke!

FERIA.

The monarch is
Engaged in urgent business. No one now
Can be admitted.

EBOLI.

Has he signed, as yet,
The fatal sentence? He has been deceived.

DOMINGO (*giving her a significant look at a distance*).

The Princess Eboli!

EBOLI (*going to him*).

What! you here, priest?
The very man I want! You can confirm
My testimony!

[*She seizes his hand and would drag him into the Cabinet.*

DOMINGO.

I? You rave, princess!

FERIA.

Hold back! The king cannot attend you now.

EBOLI.

But he must hear me — he must hear the truth!
The truth! — were he ten times a Deity!

DOMINGO.

Away! You hazard everything! Stand back!

EBOLI.

Man! tremble at the anger of thy idol.
I have nought left to hazard.

[*Attempts to enter the Cabinet;* ALVA *rushes out, his eyes sparkling, triumph in his gait. He hastens to* DOMINGO, *and embraces him.*

ALVA.

Let each church
Resound with high Te Deums. Victory
At length is ours.

DOMINGO.

What! — ours?

ALVA (*to* DOMINGO *and the other Grandees*).

Now to the king.
You shall, hereafter, hear the sequel from me.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Chamber in the Royal Palace, separated from a large forecourt by an iron-barred gate. Sentinels walking up and down.

CARLOS *sitting at a table, with his head leaning forward on his arms, as if he were asleep. In the background of the Chamber are some Officers, confined with him. The* MARQUIS POSA *enters, unobserved by him, and whispers to the Officers, who immediately withdraw. He himself steps up close to* CARLOS, *and looks at him for a few minutes in silent sorrow. At last he makes a motion, which awakens him out of his stupor.* CARLOS *rises, and, seeing the* MARQUIS, *starts back. He regards him for some time with fixed eyes, and draws his hand over his forehead as if he wished to recollect something.*

MARQUIS.

Carlos! 'tis I.

CARLOS (*gives him his hand*).

Com'st thou to me again?
'Tis friendly of thee, truly.

MARQUIS.

Here, I thought
Thou mightest need a friend.

CARLOS.

Indeed! Was that
Thy real thought? — O joy unspeakable!
Right well I knew thou still wert true to me.

MARQUIS.

I have deserved this from thee.

CARLOS.

Hast thou not?
And now we understand each other fully,
It joys my heart. This kindness, this forbearance,
Becomes our noble souls. For should there be
One rash, unjust demand amongst my wishes,
Wouldst thou, for that, refuse me what was just?
Virtue I know may often be severe,
But never is she cruel and inhuman.
O! it hath cost thee much — full well I know
How thy kind heart with bitter anguish bled,
As thy hands deck'd their victim for the altar!

MARQUIS.

What mean'st thou, Carlos?

CARLOS.

Thou, thyself, wilt now
Fulfil the joyous course I should have run. —
Thou wilt bestow on Spain those golden days,
She might have hoped, in vain, to win from me.
I'm lost, for ever lost — thou saw'st it clearly. —
This fatal love has scatter'd — and for ever —

All the bright early blossoms of my mind.
To all thy great exalted hopes I'm dead.
Chance led thee to the king — or Providence, —
It cost thee but my secret — and at once
He was thine own — thou may'st become his angel:
But I am lost, tho' Spain perhaps may flourish.
Well, there is nothing to condemn, if not
My own mad blindness. O, I should have known
That thou art no less great, than tender-hearted.

MARQUIS.

No! I foresaw not, I consider'd not
That friendship's generous heart would lead thee on,
Beyond my worldly prudence. I have err'd,
My fabric's shatter'd — I forgot thy heart.

CARLOS.

Yet, if it had been possible to spare
Her fate — O how intensely I had thank'd thee!
Could I not bear the burden by myself?
And why must she be made a second victim?
But now no more, I'll spare thee this reproach.
What is the queen to thee? Say, dost thou love her?
Could thy exalted virtue e'er consult
The petty interests of my wretched passion?
O pardon me! — I was unjust —

MARQUIS.

Thou art so!
But not for this reproach. Deserved I one,
I merit all — and then I should not stand
Before you as I do. [*He takes out his portfolio.*
I have some letters
To give you back, of those you trusted to me.

CARLOS (*looks first at the letters, then at the* MARQUIS, *in astonishment*).

How!

MARQUIS.

I return them now, because they may
Prove safer in thy custody, than mine.

CARLOS.

What mean'st thou? Has his Majesty not read them?
Have they not been before him?

MARQUIS.

What, these letters!

CARLOS.

Thou didst not show them all then.

MARQUIS.

Who has said
That ever I show'd one?

CARLOS (*astonished*).

Can it be so?
Count Lerma —

MARQUIS.

He! he told thee so! Now all
Is clear as day. But who could have foreseen it?
Lerma! O no, he hath not learned to lie.
'Tis true, the king has all the other letters.

CARLOS (*looking at him long with speechless astonishment*).

But wherefore am I here?

MARQUIS.

For caution's sake.
Lest thou should chance, a second time, to make
An Eboli thy confidant.

CARLOS (*as if waking from a dream*).

Ha! Now
I see it all — all is explain'd.

MARQUIS (*goes to the door*).

Who's there?

Scene II.

Duke Alva. — *The former.*

ALVA (*approaching the* PRINCE *with respect, but turning his back on the* MARQUIS *during the whole scene*).

Prince, you are free. Deputed by the king,
I come to tell you so.
[Carlos *looks at the* Marquis *with astonishment. General silence.*
And I, in truth,
Am fortunate, to have this honour first —

CARLOS (*looking at both with extreme amazement, after a pause, to the* DUKE).

I am imprison'd, duke, and set at freedom,
Unconscious of the cause of one, or other.

ALVA.

As far as I know, prince, 'twas through an error,
To which the king was driven, by a traitor.

CARLOS.

Then am I here by order of the king?

ALVA.

Yes, through an error of his Majesty.

CARLOS.

That gives me pain indeed. — But when the king
Commits an error, 'twould beseem the king,
Methinks, to remedy the fault in person.
I am Don Philip's son — and curious eyes,
And slanderous looks, are on me. What the king
Hath done, from sense of duty, ne'er will I
Appear to owe to your considerate favour.
I am prepared to appear before the Cortes,
And will not take my sword from such a hand.

ALVA.

The king will never hesitate to grant
Your Highness a request so just. Permit
That I conduct you to him.

CARLOS.

Here I stay
Until the king, or all Madrid shall come,
To lead me from my prison. Take my answer.

[ALVA *withdraws. He is still seen for some time lingering in the court, and giving orders to the guards.*

Scene III.

Carlos *and* Marquis Posa.

CARLOS (*after the departure of the* DUKE, *full of expectation and astonishment, to the* MARQUIS).

What means all this? — Inform me, Roderigo —
Art thou not, then, the minister?

MARQUIS.

I was,
As thou canst well perceive —
[*Going to him with great emotion.*
O Carlos! Now
I have succeeded — yes — it is accomplish'd —
'Tis over now — Omnipotence be praised,
To whom I owe success.

CARLOS.

Success! What mean you?
Thy words perplex me!

MARQUIS (*takes his hand*).

Carlos! thou art saved —
Art free — but I — [*He stops short.*

CARLOS.

But thou —

MARQUIS.

Thus to my breast
I press thee now, with friendship's fullest right,
A right I've bought with all I hold most dear. —
How great, how lovely, Carlos, is this moment
Of self-approving joy!

CARLOS.

What sudden change
I mark upon thy features! Proudly now
Thy bosom heaves, thine eyes dart vivid fire!

MARQUIS.

We must say farewell, Carlos! Tremble not,
But be a man! And what thou more shalt hear,
Promise me, not by unavailing sorrow,
Unworthy of great souls, to aggravate
The pangs of parting. I am lost to thee,
Carlos, for many years — fools say, for ever.
[CARLOS *withdraws his hand, but makes no reply.*
Be thou a man: I've reckon'd much on thee —
I have not even shunn'd to pass with thee
This awful hour — which men, in words of fear,
Have term'd the final one. I own it, Carlos,
I joy to pass it thus. Come, let us sit —
I feel myself grown weary and exhausted —
[*He approaches* CARLOS, *who is in a lifeless stupor, and allows himself to be involuntarily drawn down by him.*
Where art thou? — No reply! — I must be brief.
Upon the day that follow'd our last meeting
At the Carthusian monast'ry, the king
Call'd me before him. What ensued, thou knowest,
And all Madrid. Thou hast not heard, however,
Thy secret even then had reach'd his ears —
That letters, in the queen's possession found,
Had testified against thee. This I learn'd
From his own lips — I was his confidant.
[*He pauses for* CARLOS'S *answer, but he still remains silent.*
Yes, Carlos, with my lips I broke my faith —
Guided the plot, myself, that work'd thy ruin.
Thy deed spoke trumpet-tongued; to clear thee fully

'Twas now too late: to frustrate his revenge
Was all that now remain'd for me; and so
I made myself thy enemy to — serve thee
With fuller power — dost thou not hear me, Carlos?

CARLOS.

Go on! — go on! I hear thee.

MARQUIS.

To this point
I'm guiltless — But the unaccustom'd beams
Of royal favour dazzled me. The rumour,
As I had well foreseen, soon reach'd thine ears:
But by mistaken delicacy led,
And blinded by the vain desire to end
My enterprise alone, I kept conceal'd
From friendship's ear my hazardous design.
This was my fatal error! Here I fail'd! —
I know it. — My self-confidence was madness.
Pardon that confidence — 'twas founded, Carlos,
Upon our friendship's everlasting base.
[*He pauses.* — CARLOS *passes from torpid silence to violent agitation.*
That which I feared, befel. Unreal dangers
Alarmed your mind. — The bleeding queen — the tumult
Within the palace — Lerma's interference —
And, last of all, my own mysterious silence,
Conspired to overwhelm thy heart with wonder.
Thou waver'dst, thought'st me lost; but far too noble
To doubt thy friend's integrity, thy soul
Clothed his defection with a robe of honour,
Nor judged him faithless, till it found a motive
To screen and justify his breach of faith.
Forsaken by thy only friend — 'twas then
Thou sought'st the arms of Princess Eboli —

A demon's arms! 'Twas she betray'd thee, Carlos!
I saw thee fly to her — a dire foreboding
Struck on my heart — I follow'd thee, too late!
Already wert thou prostrate at her feet,
The dread avowal had escaped thy lips —
No way was left to save thee.

CARLOS.

No! — her heart
Was moved, thou dost mistake, her heart was moved.

MARQUIS.

Night overspread my mind. No remedy,
No refuge, no retreat, was left to me
In nature's boundless compass. Blind despair
Transform'd me to a fury — to a tiger —
I raised my dagger to a woman's breast.
But in that moment — in that dreadful moment —
A radiant sunbeam fell upon my soul.
"Could I mislead the king! Could I succeed
In making him think me the criminal!
Howe'er improbable, the very guilt
Will be enough to win the king's belief.
I'll dare the task — a sudden thunderbolt
May make the tyrant start — what want I further?
He stops to think, and Carlos thus gains time
To fly to Brussels."

CARLOS.

And hast thou done this?

MARQUIS.

I have despatch'd a letter to Prince William,
Saying I loved the queen, and had escaped
The king's mistrust, in the unjust suspicion
Which falsely fell on thee — that I had found

Means, through the monarch's favour, to obtain
Free access to the queen. I added, farther,
That I was fearful of discovery —
That thou hadst learn'd my secret, and hadst sped
To Princess Eboli, with hopes through her
To warn the queen — that I had made thee prisoner —
And now that all seem'd lost, I had resolved
To fly to Brussels. This same letter I —

CARLOS (*interrupts him terrified*).

Hast surely not entrusted to the post!
Thou know'st that letters to Brabant and Flanders —

MARQUIS.

Are given to the king; and as things go,
Taxis would seem to have discharged his duty.

CARLOS.

Heavens! then I'm lost.

MARQUIS.

How lost? What meanest thou?

CARLOS.

And thou, alas! art lost together with me —
This dreadful fraud my father ne'er will pardon.

MARQUIS.

This fraud! Thou'rt mad! Who will disclose it to him?

CARLOS (*regards him with a fixed look*).

Who! Dost thou ask? I will myself.

MARQUIS.

Thou ravest!
Stand back —

CARLOS.

Away! For Heaven's sake hold me not.
Whilst I stay here, he's hiring the assassins.

MARQUIS.

Then is our time more precious — and we still
Have much to say.

CARLOS.

What! Before all is finished?

[*He makes another effort to go. The* MARQUIS *holds him by the arm, and looks at him impressively.*

MARQUIS.

Carlos! was I so scrupulous — so eager —
When thou, a boy, didst shed thy blood for me?

CARLOS (*with emotion, and full of admiration*).

Kind Providence!

MARQUIS.

Reserve thyself for Flanders!
The kingdom is thy destiny — 'tis mine
To give my life for thee.

CARLOS (*takes his hand with deep sensibility*).

No, no! he will not,
Cannot resist a virtue so sublime.
I will conduct thee to him, and together,
Arm linked in arm, will we appear before him.
Then thus will I address him: "Father, see,
This is the way a friend acts towards his friend."
Trust me, 'twill move him — it will touch his heart,

He's not without humanity, — my father.
Yes, it will move him. With hot tears, his eyes
Will overflow — and he will pardon us.

[*A shot is fired through the iron grating.* — CARLOS *leaps up.*

CARLOS.

Whom was that meant for?

MARQUIS (*sinking down*).

I believe — for me.

CARLOS (*falling to the earth with a loud cry of grief*).

O God of mercy!

MARQUIS.

He is quick — the king! —
I had hoped — a little longer — Carlos — think
Of means of flight — dost hear me? — of thy flight.
Thy mother — knows it all — I can no more. [*Dies.*

[CARLOS *remains by the corpse, like one bereft of life. After some time the* KING *enters, accompanied by many Grandees; and starts, panic-struck, at the sight. A general and deep silence. The Grandees range themselves in a semicircle around them both, and regard the* KING *and his* SON *alternately. The latter continues without any sign of life. The* KING *regards him in thoughtful silence.*

Scene IV.

The King, Carlos, *the* Dukes Alva, Feria, *and* Medina Sidonia, Prince of Parma, Count Lerma, Domingo, *and numerous Grandees.*

KING (*in a gentle tone*).

Thy prayer hath met a gracious hearing, prince.
And here I come, with all the noble peers
Of this my court, to bring thee liberty.

[Carlos *raises his eyes and looks around him, like one awakened from a dream. His eyes are fixed now on the* King, *now on the corpse; he gives no answer.*

Receive thy sword again. We've been too rash!

[*He approaches him, holds out his hand, and assists him to rise.*

My son's not in his place; — Carlos arise!
Come to thy father's arms! His love awaits thee.

CARLOS (*receives the embrace of the* King *without any consciousness. Suddenly recollects himself, pauses and looks fixedly at him*).

Thou smell'st of blood — no, I cannot embrace thee!

[*Pushes his father back. All the Grandees are in commotion.* Carlos *to them:*

Nay, stand not there confounded and amaz'd!
What monstrous action have I done? Defiled
The Anointed of the Lord! O fear me not,
I would not lay a hand on him. Behold
Stamp'd on his forehead is the damning brand!
The hand of God hath mark'd him!

KING (*about to go quickly*).

Nobles! follow.

CARLOS.

Whither? You stir not from this spot.

[*Detaining the* KING *forcibly with both hands, while with one he manages to seize the sword which the* KING *had brought with him, and it comes from the scabbard.*

KING.

What! Draw
A sword upon thy father?

ALL THE GRANDEES (*drawing their swords*).

Regicide!

CARLOS (*holding the* KING *firmly with one hand, the naked sword in the other*).

Put up your swords! What! Think you I am mad?
I am not so: or you were much to blame
Thus to remind me, that upon the point
Of this my sword, his trembling life doth hover.
I pray you, stand aloof; for souls like mine
Need soothing. There — hold back! And with the king,
What I have yet to settle, touches not
Your loyalty. See there — his hand is bloody!
Do you not see it? And now look you here!
[*Pointing to the corse.*
This hath he done with a well practised hand.

KING (*to the Grandees, who press anxiously round him*).

Retire! Why do you tremble? Are we not
Father and son? I will yet wait and see
To what atrocious crime his nature —

CARLOS.

Nature!
I know her not. Murder is now the word!
The bonds of all humanity are sever'd.
Thine own hands have dissolved them, through the realm.
Shall I respect a tie which thou hast scorn'd?
O see! see here! the foulest deed of blood
That e'er the world beheld. Is there no God?
That kings, in his creation, work such havoc?
Is there no God, I ask? Since mothers' wombs
Bore children, One alone — and only One —
So guiltlessly hath died. And art thou sensible
What thou hast done? O no! he knows it not:
Knows not that he has robb'd — despoil'd the world
Of a more noble, precious, dearer life,
Than he and all his century can boast.

KING (*with a tone of softness*).

If I have been too hasty, Carlos — thou,
For whom I have thus acted, should at least
Not call me to account.

CARLOS.

Is't possible!
Did you then never guess how dear to me
Was he who here lies dead? Thou lifeless corse!
Instruct him — aid his wisdom to resolve
This dark enigma now. He was my friend.
And would you know why he has perish'd thus?
He gave his life for me.

KING.

Ha! my suspicions!

CARLOS.

Pardon, thou bleeding corse, that I profane
Thy virtue, to such ears! But let him blush
With deep-felt shame, — the crafty politician, —
That his grayheaded wisdom was o'erreached
E'en by the judgment of a youth! Yes, Sire!
We two were brothers! Bound by nobler bands
Than nature ties. His whole life's bright career
Was love. His noble death was love for me.
E'en in the moment when his brief esteem
Exalted you, he was my own. And when
With fascinating tongue he sported with
Your haughty, giant mind, 'twas your conceit
To bridle him; but you became, yourself,
The pliant tool of his exalted plans.
That I became a prisoner — my arrest —
Was his deep friendship's meditated work.
That letter to Prince William was design'd
To save my life. It was the first deceit
He ever practised! To ensure my safety,
He rush'd on death himself and nobly perish'd.
You lavish'd on him all your favour, — yet
For me he died. Your heart, your confidence,
You forced upon him. As a toy, he held
Your sceptre and your power, — he cast them from him,
And gave his life for me.

[*The* KING *stands motionless, with eyes fixed on the ground; all the Grandees regard him with surprise and alarm.*

How could it be
That you gave credit to his strange deceit?
Meanly indeed he valued you, to try
By such coarse artifice to win his ends!
You dared to court his friendship, but gave way
Before a test so simple. O no! never
For souls like yours was such a being form'd;

That well he knew himself, when he rejected
Your crowns, your gifts, your greatness, and yourself.
This fine-toned lyre broke in your iron hand.
And you could do no more than murder him!

ALVA (*never having taken his eyes from the* KING, *and observing his emotion with uneasiness, approaches him with apprehension*).

Keep not this death-like silence, Sire! Look round,
And speak at least to us!

CARLOS.

Once, you were not
Indifferent to him. And deeply once,
You occupied his thoughts. It might have been
His lot to make you happy. His full heart
Might have enriched you with its mere abundance;
An atom of his soul had been enough
To make a god of you. You've robb'd yourself —
Plunder'd yourself and me. What could you give,
To raise again a spirit like to this?

[*Deep silence. Many of the Grandees turn away, or conceal their faces in their mantles.*

O ye! who stand around with terror dumb,
And mute surprise, do not condemn the youth
Who holds this language to the king, his father!
Look on this corse! Behold! for me he died.
If ye have tears — if in your veins flows blood,
Not molten brass — look here, and blame me not.

[*He turns to the* KING *with more self-possession and calmness.*

Doubtless you wait the end of this rude scene?
Here is my sword, for you are still my king.
Think not I fear your vengeance. Murder me,
As you have murder'd this most noble man!
My life is forfeit, — that I know full well.
But what is life to me? I here renounce

All that this world can offer to my hopes.
Seek among strangers for a son. Here lies
My kingdom.

[*He sinks down on the corse, and takes no part in what follows. A confused tumult and the noise of a crowd is heard in the distance. All is deep silence around the* KING. *His eyes scan the circle over, but no one returns his looks.*

KING.

What! Will no one make reply?
Each eye upon the ground, each look abash'd!
My sentence is pronounced. I read it here,
Proclaim'd in all this lifeless mute demeanour.
My vassals have condemn'd me.

[*Silence as before. The tumult grows louder. A murmur is heard among the Grandees. They exchange embarrassed looks.* COUNT LERMA *at length gently touches* ALVA.

LERMA.

Here's rebellion!

ALVA (*in a low voice*).

I fear it.

LERMA.

It approaches! They are coming!

SCENE V.

An officer of the Body Guard. The former.

OFFICER (*urgently*).

Rebellion! Where's the king?

[*He makes his way through the crowd, up to the* KING.

Madrid's in arms!
To thousands swell'd, the soldiery and people
Surround the palace; and reports are spread —
That Carlos is a prisoner — that his life
Is threaten'd. And the mob demand to see
Him living, or Madrid will be in flames.

THE GRANDEES (*with excitement*).

Defend the king!

ALVA (*to the* KING, *who remains quiet and unmoved*).

Fly, Sire! your life's in danger.
As yet we know not who has arm'd the people.

KING (*rousing from his stupor, and advancing with dignity among them*).

Stands my throne firm, and am I sovereign yet
Over this empire? No! I'm king no more.
These cowards weep — moved by a puny boy
They only wait the signal, to desert me.
I am betray'd by rebels!

ALVA.

Dreadful thought!

KING.

There! fling yourselves before him — down before
The young, the expectant king; I'm nothing now
But a forsaken, old, defenceless man!

ALVA.

Spaniards! is't come to this!

[*All crowd around the* KING, *and fall on their knees before him with drawn swords.* CARLOS *remains alone with the corse, deserted by all.*

KING (*tearing off his mantle and throwing it from him*).

There! clothe him now
With this royal mantle; and on high
Bear him, in triumph, o'er my trampled corse!
[*He falls senseless in* ALVA'S *and* LERMA'S *arms.*

LERMA.

For Heaven's sake, help!

FERIA.

O sad, disastrous chance!

LERMA.

He faints!

ALVA (*leaves the* KING *in* LERMA'S *and* FERIA'S *hands*).

Attend his Majesty! whilst I
Make it my aim to tranquillise Madrid.
[*Exit* ALVA. *The* KING *is borne off, attended by all the Grandees.*

SCENE VI.

CARLOS *remains behind with the corse. — After a few moments* LOUIS MERCADO *appears, looks cautiously around him, and stands a long time silent behind the* PRINCE, *who does not observe him.*

MERCADO.

I come, prince, from her Majesty the queen.
[CARLOS *turns away and makes no reply.*
My name, Mercado, I'm the queen's physician:
See my credentials.
[*Shows the Prince a signet ring.* CARLOS *remains still silent.*

And the queen desires
To speak with you to-day — on weighty business.

CARLOS.

Nothing is weighty in this world to me.

MERCADO.

A charge the Marquis Posa left with her.

CARLOS (*looking up quickly*).

Indeed! I come this instant.

MERCADO.

No, not yet,
Most gracious prince! you must delay till night.
Each avenue is watch'd, the guards are doubled,
You ne'er could reach the palace unperceived;
You would endanger everything.

CARLOS.

And yet —

MERCADO.

I know one means alone that can avail us.
'Tis the queen's thought, and she suggests it to you;
But it is bold, adventurous and strange!

CARLOS.

What is it?

MERCADO.

A report has long prevail'd,
That in the secret vaults, beneath the palace,
At midnight, shrouded in a monk's attire,
The emperor's departed spirit walks.

The people still give credit to the tale,
And the guards watch the post with inward terror.
Now, if you but determine to assume
This dress, you may pass freely through the guards,
Until you reach the chamber of the queen,
Which this small key will open. Your attire
Will save you from attack. But on the spot,
Prince! your decision must be made at once.
The requisite apparel, and the mask,
Are ready in your chamber. I must haste
And take the queen your answer.

CARLOS.

And the hour?

MERCADO.

Is midnight.

CARLOS.

Then inform her I will come.

[*Exit* MERCADO.

SCENE VII.

CARLOS *and* COUNT LERMA.

LERMA.

Save yourself, prince. The king's enraged against you.
Your liberty, if not your life's in danger!
Ask me no farther — I have stolen away
To give you warning — fly this very instant.

CARLOS.

Heaven will protect me!

LERMA.

As the queen observed
To me, this moment, you must leave Madrid

This very day, and fly to Brussels, prince.
Postpone it not I pray you. The commotion
Favours your flight. The queen, with this design,
Has raised it. No one will presume so far
As to lay hand on you. Swift steeds await you
At the Carthusian convent, and behold
Here are your weapons, should you be attacked.
[LERMA *gives him a dagger and pistols.*

CARLOS.

Thanks, thanks, Count Lerma!

LERMA.

This day's sad event
Has moved my inmost soul! No faithful friend
Will ever love like him. No patriot breathes
But weeps for you. More now I dare not say.

CARLOS.

Count Lerma! he who's gone consider'd you
A man of honour.

LERMA.

Farewell, prince, again!
Success attend you! Happier times will come —
But I shall be no more. Receive my homage!
[*Falls on one knee.*

CARLOS (*endeavours to prevent him, with much emotion*).

Not so — not so, count! I am too much moved —
I would not be unmann'd!

LERMA (*kissing his hand with feeling*).

My children's king!
To die for you will be their privilege!
It is not mine, alas! But in those children

Remember me! Return in peace to Spain.
May you on Philip's throne feel as a man,
For you have learn'd to suffer! Undertake
No bloody deed against your father, prince!
Philip compell'd his father to yield up
The throne to him; and this same Philip now
Trembles at his own son. Think, prince, of that!
And may Heaven prosper and direct your path!

[*Exit quickly.* CARLOS *about to hasten away by another side, but turns rapidly around, and throws himself down before the corse, which he again folds in his arms. He then hurries from the room.*

SCENE VIII.

The King's Antechamber.

DUKE ALVA *and* DUKE FERIA *enter in conversation.*

ALVA.

The town is quieted. How is the king?

FERIA.

In the most fearful state. Within his chamber,
He is shut up, and whatsoe'er may happen,
He will admit no person to his presence.
The treason of the marquis has at once
Changed his whole nature. We no longer know him.

ALVA.

I must go to him, nor respect his feelings.
A great discovery which I have made —

FERIA.

A new discovery?

ALVA.

A Carthusian monk
My guards observed, with stealthy footsteps, creep
Into the prince's chamber, and inquire,
With anxious curiosity, about
The Marquis Posa's death. They seized him straight,
And question'd him. Urged by the fear of death,
He made confession, that he bore about him
Papers of high importance, which the marquis
Enjoin'd him to deliver to the prince,
If, before sunset, he should not return.

FERIA.

Well, and what further?

ALVA.

These same letters state
That Carlos from Madrid must fly, before
The morning dawn.

FERIA.

Indeed!

ALVA.

And that a ship at Cadiz lies
Ready for sea, to carry him to Flushing.
And that the Netherlands but wait his presence
To shake the Spanish fetters from their arms.

FERIA.

Can this be true?

ALVA

And other letters say,
A fleet of Soliman's will sail for Rhodes,
According to the treaty, to attack
The Spanish squadron in the Midland seas.

FERIA.

Impossible.

ALVA.

And hence, I understand
The object of the journeys, which of late
The marquis made thro' Europe. 'Twas no less
Than to rouse all the northern powers to arms
In aid of Flanders' freedom.

FERIA.

Was it so?

ALVA.

There is, besides, appended to these letters,
The full concerted plan of all the war,
Which is to disunite from Spain's control
The Netherlands for ever. Nought omitted —
The power and opposition close compared;
All the resources accurately noted,
Together with the maxims to be followed,
And all the treaties which they should conclude.
The plan is fiendish, but 'tis no less splendid.

FERIA.

The deep designing traitor!

ALVA.

And, moreover,
There is allusion made, in these same letters,
To some mysterious conference, the prince
Must with his mother hold, upon the eve
Preceding his departure.

FERIA.

That must be
This very day.

ALVA.

At midnight. But for this
I have already taken proper steps.
You see the case is pressing. Not a moment
Is to be lost: open the monarch's chamber.

FERIA.

Impossible! All entrance is forbidden.

ALVA.

I'll open then myself — the increasing danger
Must justify my boldness.

[*As he is on the point of approaching the door it opens, and the* KING *comes out.*

FERIA.

'Tis himself!

SCENE IX.

The KING. *The preceding.*

[*All are alarmed at his appearance, fall back, and let him pass through them. He appears to be in a waking dream like a sleep-walker. His dress and figure indicate the disorder caused by his last fainting. With slow steps he walks past the Grandees and looks at each with a fixed eye, but without recognising any of them. At last he stands still, wrapped in thought, his eyes fixed on the ground, till the emotions of his mind gradually express themselves in words.*

KING.

Restore me back the dead! Yes, I must have him.

DOMINGO (*whispering to* ALVA).

Speak to him, duke.

KING.

He died despising me!
Have him again I must — and make him think
More nobly of me.

ALVA (*approaching with fear*).

Sire!

KING (*looking around the circle*).

Who speaks to me?
Have you forgotten who I am? Why not
Upon your knees, before your king, ye creatures!
Am I not still your king? I must command
Submission from you. Do you all then slight me,
Because one man despised me?

ALVA.

Gracious king!
No more of him: a new and mightier foe
Arises in the bosom of your realm.

FERIA.

Prince Carlos —

KING.

Had a friend who died for him. —
For him! With me, he might have shared an empire. —
How he look'd down upon me! — From the throne,
Kings look not down so proudly. — It was plain,
How vain his conquest made him. His keen sorrow
Confess'd how great his loss. — Man weeps not so,
For aught that's perishable. O that he might
But live again! I'd give my Indies for it!
Omnipotence! thou bring'st no comfort to me;

Thou canst not stretch thine arm into the grave,
To rectify one little act, committed
With hasty rashness, 'gainst the life of man.
The dead return no more. Who dare affirm
That I am happy? In the tomb he dwells,
Who scorn'd to flatter me. What care I now
For all who live? One spirit, one free being,
And one alone, arose in all this age!
He died despising me!

ALVA.

Our lives are useless!
Spaniards, let's die at once! E'en in the grave
This man still robs us of our monarch's heart.

KING (*sits down and leans his head on his arm*).

O! had he died for me! I loved him, too,
And much. Dear to me was he as a son.
In his young mind, there brightly rose for me
A new and beauteous morning. Who can say
What I had destined for him? He to me
Was a first love. All Europe may condemn me,
Europe may overwhelm me with its curse,
But I deserved his thanks.

DOMINGO.

What spell is this?

KING.

And, say, for whom did he desert me thus?
A boy, — my son? O no, believe it not!
A Posa would not perish for a boy:
The scanty flame of friendship could not fill
A Posa's heart. It beat for human kind.
His passion was the world, and the whole course
Of future generations yet unborn.

To do them service, he secured a throne —
And lost it. Such high treason 'gainst mankind
Could Posa e'er forgive himself? O no;
I know his feelings better. Not, that he
Carlos preferred to Philip, but the youth, —
The tender pupil, — to the aged monarch.
The father's evening sunbeam could not ripen
His novel projects. He reserved for this
The young son's orient rays. O 'tis undoubted
They wait for my decease.

ALVA.

And of your thoughts,
Read in these letters strongest confirmation.

KING.

'Tis possible he may miscalculate.
I'm still myself. Thanks, Nature, for thy gifts;
I feel, within my frame, the strength of youth:
I'll turn their schemes to mockery. His virtue
Shall be an empty dream — his death, a fool's.
His fall shall crush his friend and age together.
We'll test it now — how they can do without me?
The world is still, for one short evening, mine.
And this same evening will I so employ,
That no reformer, yet to come, shall reap
Another harvest, in the waste I'll leave,
For ten long generations after me. —
He would have offer'd me a sacrifice
To his new deity — Humanity!
So on Humanity I'll take revenge. —
And with his puppet I'll at once commence.
[*To the* DUKE ALVA.
What you have now to tell me of the prince,
Repeat. What tidings do these letters bring?

ALVA.

These letters, Sire, contain the last bequest
Of Posa to Prince Carlos.

KING (*reads the papers, watched by all present. He then lays them aside and walks in silence up and down the room.*)

Summon straight
The Cardinal Inquisitor; and beg
He will bestow an hour upon the king
This very night!

TAXIS.

Just on the stroke of two
The horses must be ready and prepared,
At the Carthusian monastery.

ALVA.

Spies
Despatch'd by me, moreover, have observed
Equipments at the convent for a journey,
On which the prince's arms were recognised.

FERIA.

And it is rumour'd that large sums are raised,
In the queen's name, among the Moorish agents,
Destined for Brussels.

KING.

Where is Carlos now?

ALVA.

With Posa's body.

KING.

Are there lights as yet
Within the queen's apartment?

ALVA.

Everything
Is silent there. She has dismiss'd her maids
Far earlier than as yet has been her custom.
The Duchess of Arcos, who last was with her,
Left her in soundest sleep.

[*An Officer of the Body Guard enters, takes the* DUKE OF FERIA *aside, and whispers to him. The latter, struck with surprise, turns to* DUKE ALVA. *The others crowd around him, and a murmuring noise arises.*

FERIA, TAXIS, *and* DOMINGO (*at the same time*).

'Tis wonderful!

KING.

What is the matter?

FERIA.

News scarce credible!

DOMINGO.

Two soldiers, who have just return'd from duty,
Report — but — O the tale's ridiculous.

KING.

What do they say?

ALVA.

They say, in the left wing
Of the queen's palace, that the emperor's ghost
Appear'd before them, and with solemn gait
Pass'd on. This rumour is confirm'd by all
The sentinels, who through the whole pavilion
Their watches keep. And they, moreover, add,
The phantom in the queen's apartment vanish'd.

KING.

And in what shape appeared it?

OFFICER.

In the robes,
The same attire, he in Saint Justi wore
For the last time, apparell'd as a monk.

KING.

A monk! And did the sentries know his person,
Whilst he was yet alive? They could not else
Determine that it was the emperor.

OFFICER.

The sceptre which he bore was evidence
It was the emperor.

DOMINGO.

And the story goes,
He often has been seen in this same dress.

KING.

Did no one speak to him?

OFFICER.

No person dared.
The sentries pray'd, and let him pass in silence.

KING.

The phantom vanish'd in the queen's apartments!

OFFICER.

In the queen's antechamber. [*General silence.*

KING (*turns quickly around*).

What say you?

ALVA.

Sire? we are silent.

KING (*after some thought, to the* OFFICER).

Let my guards be ready,
And under arms, and order all approach
To that wing of the palace to be stopp'd.
I fain would have a word with this same ghost.
[*Exit* OFFICER. — *Enter a* PAGE.

PAGE.

The Cardinal Inquisitor.

KING (*to all present*).

Retire!

[*The* CARDINAL INQUISITOR, *an old man of ninety, and blind, enters, supported on a staff, and led by two Dominicans. The Grandees fall on their knees as he passes, and touch the hem of his garment. He gives them his blessing, and they depart.*

SCENE X.

The KING *and the* GRAND INQUISITOR.

A long silence.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Say, do I stand before the king?

KING.

You do.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

I never thought it would be so again!

KING.

I now renew the scenes of early youth,
When Philip sought his sage instructor's counsel.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Your glorious sire, my pupil, Charles the Fifth,
Nor sought or needed counsel at my hands.

KING.

So much the happier he! I, cardinal,
Am guilty of a murder, and no rest —

GRAND INQUISITOR.

What was the reason for this murder?

KING.

'Twas
A fraud unparallel'd —

GRAND INQUISITOR.

I know it all.

KING.

What do you know? Thro' whom, and since what time?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

For years — what you have only learn'd since sunset.

KING (*with astonishment*).

You knew this man then!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

All his life is noted,
From its commencement, to its sudden close,
In Santa Casa's holy registers.

KING.

Yet he enjoy'd his liberty!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

The chain
With which he struggled, but which held him bound,
Tho' long, was firm, nor easy to be sever'd.

KING.

He has already been beyond the kingdom.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Where'er he travell'd I was at his side.

KING (*walks backwards and forwards in displeasure*).

You knew the hands, then, I had fallen into;
And yet delay'd to warn me!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

This rebuke
I pay you back. Why did you not consult us,
Before you sought the arms of such a man?
You knew him: one sole glance unmask'd him to you.
Why did you rob the Office of its victim?
Are we thus trifled with? When majesty
Can stoop to such concealment, and in secret,

Behind our backs, league with our enemies,
What must our fate be then? If one be spared,
What plea can justify the fate of thousands?

KING.

But he, no less, has fallen a sacrifice.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

No: he is murder'd — basely, foully murder'd.
The blood that should so gloriously have flow'd
To honour us has stain'd the assassin's hand.
What claim had you to touch our sacred rights?
He but existed, by our hands to perish.
God gave him to this age's exigence,
To perish, as a terrible example,
And turn high vaunting reason into shame.
Such was my long-laid plan — behold, destroy'd
In one brief hour — the toil of many years.
We are defrauded, and your only gain
Is bloody hands.

KING.

Passion impell'd me to it.
Forgive me!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Passion! And does royal Philip
Thus answer me? Have I alone grown old?
[*Shaking his head angrily.*
Passion! Make conscience free within your realms,
If you're a slave yourself.

KING.

In things like this
I'm but a novice. Bear in patience with me.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

No, I'm ill pleased with you — to see you thus
Tarnish the bygone glories of your reign.
Where is that Philip, whose unchanging soul,
Fix'd, as the polar star, in heaven above,
Round its own axis, still pursued its course.
Is all the memory of preceding years
For ever gone? And did the world become
New moulded, when you stretch'd your hand to *him?*
Was poison no more poison? Did distinction
'Twixt good and evil — truth and falsehood — vanish?
What then is resolution, what is firmness,
What is the faith of man, if in one weak,
Unguarded hour, the rules of threescore years
Dissolve in air, like woman's fickle favour?

KING.

I look'd into his eyes. O pardon me
This weak relapse into mortality!
The world has one less access to your heart —
Your eyes are sunk in night.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

What did this man
Want with you? What new thing could he adduce,
You did not know before? And are you versed
So ill with fanatics and innovators?
Does the reformer's vaunting language sound
So novel to your ears? If the firm edifice
Of your conviction totters to mere words,
Should you not shudder to subscribe the fate
Of many thousand poor deluded souls,
Who mount the flaming pile, for nothing worse?

KING.

I sought a human being. These Domingos —

GRAND INQUISITOR.

How! human beings! What are they to you?
Ciphers to count withal — no more! Alas!
And must I now repeat the elements
Of kingly knowledge, to my gray-hair'd pupil?
An earthly god must learn to bear the want
Of what may be denied him. When you whine
For sympathy, is not the world your equal?
What rights should you possess above your equals?

KING (*throwing himself into a chair*).

I'm a mere suff'ring mortal — that I feel —
And you demand from me, a wretched creature,
What the Creator only can perform.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

No, Sire! I am not thus to be deceived.
I see you through. You would escape from us.
The Church's heavy chains press'd hard upon you —
You would be free, and claim your independence.
[*He pauses. The* KING *is silent.*
We are avenged. Be thankful to the Church,
That checks you, with the kindness of a mother.
The erring choice, you were allow'd to make,
Has proved your punishment. You stand reproved!
Now, you may turn to us again. And know,
If I, this day, had not been summon'd here,
By Heaven above! before to-morrow's sun,
You would, yourself, have stood at my tribunal!

KING.

Forbear this language, priest! Restrain thyself.
I'll not endure it from thee! In such tones,
No tongue shall speak to me.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Then why, O king!
Call up the ghost of Samuel? — I've anointed
Two monarchs to the throne of Spain. I hoped
To leave behind a firm-establish'd work.
I see the fruit of all my life is lost.
Don Philip's hands have shatter'd what I built.
But tell me, Sire, wherefore have I been summon'd?
What do I here? — I am not minded, king,
To seek such interviews again.

KING.

But one —
One service more — the last — and then in peace
Depart. Let all the past be now forgotten —
Let peace be made between us. We are friends.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

When Philip bends with due humility.

KING (*after a pause*).

My son is meditating treason.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Well!
And what do you resolve?

KING.

On all, or nothing!

GRAND INQUISITOR.

What mean you by this *all?*

KING.

He must escape,
Or die.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Well, Sire! decide.

KING.

And can you not
Establish some new creed to justify
The bloody murder of one's only son?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

To appease eternal justice, God's own Son
Expired upon the cross.

KING.

And can you spread
This creed throughout all Europe?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Ay, as far
As the true cross is worship'd.

KING.

But I sin —
Sin against Nature. Canst thou, by thy power,
Silence her mighty voice?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

The voice of Nature
Avails not over faith.

KING.

My right to judge
I place within your hands. Can I retrace
The step once taken?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Give him up to me!

KING.

My only son! — For whom then have I labour'd?

GRAND INQUISITOR.

For the grave rather than for liberty!

KING (*rising up*).

We are agreed. Come with me.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Monarch! Whither?

KING.

From his own father's hands to take the victim.

[*Leads him away.*

Scene XI.

Queen's Apartment.

Carlos. *The* Queen. *Afterward the* King *and Attendants.*

Carlos *in Monk's attire, a mask over his face, which he is just taking off: under his arm a naked sword. It is quite dark. He approaches a door, which is in the act of opening. The* Queen *comes out in her night-dress with a lighted candle.* Carlos *falls on one knee before her.*

CARLOS.

Elizabeth!

QUEEN (*regarding him with silent sorrow*).

Do we thus meet again?

CARLOS.

'Tis thus we meet again! [*A silence.*

QUEEN (*endeavouring to collect herself*).

Carlos, arise!
We must not now unnerve each other thus.
The mighty dead will not be honour'd now
By fruitless tears. Tears are for petty sorrows!
He gave himself for thee! With his dear life,
He purchased thine. And shall this precious blood
Flow for a mere delusion of the brain?
O, Carlos, I have pledged myself for thee.
On that assurance, did he flee from hence
More satisfied. O do not falsify
My word.

CARLOS (*with animation*).

To him I'll raise a monument
Nobler than ever honour'd proudest monarch,
And o'er his dust a paradise shall bloom!

QUEEN.

Thus did I hope to find thee! This was still
The mighty purpose of his death. On me
Devolves the last fulfilment of his plans,
And I will now fulfil my solemn oath.
Yet one more legacy, your dying friend
Bequeath'd to me. I pledged my word to him,
And wherefore should I now conceal it from you?
To me did he resign his Carlos — I
Defy suspicion, and no longer tremble
Before mankind, but will for once assume
The courage of a friend. My heart shall speak.
He called our passion — virtue! I believe him,
And will my heart no longer —

CARLOS.

Hold, O queen!
Long was I sunk in a delusive dream.
I loved, but now I am at last awake:
Forgotten be the past. Here are your letters, —
Destroy my own. Fear nothing from my passion,
It is extinct. A brighter flame now burns,
And purifies my being. All my love
Lies buried in the grave. — No mortal wish
Finds place within this bosom.
[*After a pause, taking her hand.*
I have come
To bid farewell to you, and I have learn'd,
There is a higher, greater good, my mother,
Than to call thee mine own. One rapid night

Has wing'd the tardy progress of my years,
And prematurely ripen'd me to manhood.
I have no farther business in the world,
But to remember him. My harvest now
Is ended.

[*He approaches the* QUEEN, *who conceals her face.*
Mother! will you not reply?

QUEEN.

Carlos! regard not these my tears. I cannot
Restrain them. But believe me I admire you. —

CARLOS.

Thou wert the only partner of our league:
And by this name, thou shalt remain to me
The most beloved object in this world.
No other woman can my friendship share,
More than she yesterday could win my love.
But sacred shall the royal widow be,
Should Providence conduct me to the throne.

[*The* KING, *accompanied by the* GRAND INQUISITOR, *appears in the background without being observed.*
I hasten to leave Spain, and never more
Shall I behold my father, in this world.
No more I love him. — Nature is extinct
Within this breast. Be you again his wife —
His son's for ever lost to him! Return
Back to your course of duty — I must speed
To liberate a people long oppress'd,
From a fell tyrant's hand. Madrid shall hail
Carlos as king, or ne'er behold him more.
And now a long and last farewell — [*He kisses her.*

QUEEN.

O Carlos!
How you exalt me! but I dare not soar
To such a height of greatness: — yet I may
Contemplate now your noble mind, with wonder.

CARLOS.

Am I not firm, Elizabeth? I hold thee
Thus in my arms and tremble not. The fear
Of instant death had, yesterday, not torn me
From this dear spot. [*He leaves her.*
All that is over now,
And I defy my mortal destinies.
I've held thee in these arms and waver'd not.
Hark! Heard you nothing? [*A clock strikes.*

QUEEN.

Nothing but the bell
That tolls the moment of our separation.

CARLOS.

Good night, then, mother! And you shall, from Ghent,
Receive a letter, which will first proclaim
Our secret enterprise aloud. I go
To dare King Philip to an open contest.
Henceforth there shall be nought conceal'd between us!
You need not shun the aspect of the world.
Be this my last deceit.

[*About to take up the mask — the* KING *stands between them.*

KING.

It is thy last!

[*The* QUEEN *falls senseless.*

CARLOS (*hastens to her and supports her in his arms*).
Is the queen dead? Great Heavens!

KING (*coolly and quietly to the* GRAND INQUISITOR).
Lord cardinal!
I've done *my* part. Go now, and do your own. [*Exit.*

END OF DON CARLOS.

Mary Stuart

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Elizabeth, Queen of England.
Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, a Prisoner in England.
Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.
George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury.
William Cecil, Lord Burleigh, Lord High Treasurer.
Earl of Kent.
Sir William Davison, Secretary of State.
Sir Amias Paulet, Keeper of Mary.
Sir Edward Mortimer, his Nephew.
Count L'Aubespine, the French Ambassador.
Count Bellievre, Envoy Extraordinary from France.
O'Kelly, Mortimer's Friend.
Sir Drue Drury, another Keeper of Mary.
Sir Andrew Melvil, her House Steward.
Burgoyne, her Physician.
Hannah Kennedy, her Nurse.
Margaret Curl, her Attendant.
Sheriff of the County.
Officer of the Guard.
French and English Lords.
Soldiers.
Servants of State, belonging to Elizabeth.
Servants and Female Attendants of the Queen of Scots.

Mary Stuart

ACT I.

Scene I.

A common Apartment in the Castle of Fotheringay.

Hannah Kennedy *contending violently with* Paulet, *who is about to break open a closet;* Drury *with an iron crow.*

Ken. How now, sir? What fresh outrage have we here?
Back from that cabinet!
Paul. Whence came the jewel?
I know 'twas from an upper chamber thrown;
And you would bribe the gard'ner with your trinkets.
A curse on woman's wiles! In spite of all
My strict precaution and my active search,
Still treasures here, still costly gems concealed!
And doubtless there are more where this lay hid.
[*Advancing toward the cabinet.*
Ken. Intruder, back! here lie my lady's secrets.
Paul. Exactly what I seek.
[*Drawing forth papers.*
Ken. Mere trifling papers;
The amusements only of an idle pen,
To cheat the dreary tedium of a dungeon.

PAUL. In idle hours the evil mind is busy.
KEN. Those writings are in French.
PAUL. So much the worse!
That tongue betokens England's enemy.
KEN. Sketches of letters to the Queen of England.
PAUL. I'll be their bearer. Ha! what glitters here?
[*He touches a secret spring, and draws out jewels from a private drawer.*
A royal diadem enriched with stones,
And studded with the fleur-de-lis of France!
[*He hands it to his Assistant.*
Here, take it, Drury, lay it with the rest.
[*Exit* DRURY.
[And ye have found the means to hide from us
Such costly things, and screen them, until now,
From our inquiring eyes?]
KEN. O insolent
And tyrant power, to which we must submit!
PAUL. She can work ill as long as she hath treasures;
For all things turn to weapons in her hands.
KEN. (*supplicating*) O sir! be merciful; deprive us not
Of the last jewel that adorns our life!
'Tis my poor lady's only joy to view
This symbol of her former majesty,
Your hands long since have robbed us of the rest.
PAUL. 'Tis in safe custody; in proper time
'Twill be restored to you with scrupulous care.
KEN. Who that beholds these naked walls could say
That majesty dwelt here? Where is the throne?
Where the imperial canopy of state?
Must she not set her tender foot, still used
To softest treading, on the rugged ground?
With common pewter, which the lowliest dame
Would scorn, they furnish forth her homely table.

PAUL. Thus did she treat her spouse at Stirling once;
And pledged, the while, her paramour in gold.
KEN. Even the mirror's trifling aid withheld.
PAUL. The contemplation of her own vain image
Incites to hope, and prompts to daring deeds.
KEN. Books are denied her to divert her mind.
PAUL. The Bible still is left, to mend her heart.
KEN. Even of her very lute she is deprived!
PAUL. Because she tuned it to her wanton airs.
KEN. Is this a fate for her, the gentle born,
Who in her very cradle was a queen;
Who, rear'd in Catherine's luxurious court,
Enjoyed the fulness of each earthly pleasure?
Was't not enough to rob her of her power,
Must ye then envy her its paltry tinsel?
A noble heart in time resigns itself
To great calamities with fortitude;
But yet it cuts one to the soul, to part
At once with all life's little outward trappings!
PAUL. These are the things that turn the human heart
To vanity, which should collect itself
In penitence; — for a lewd, vicious life,
Want and abasement are the only penance.
KEN. If youthful blood has led her into error,
With her own heart and God she must account: —
There is no judge in England over her.
PAUL. She shall have judgment where she hath transgress'd.
KEN. Her narrow bonds restrain her from transgression.
PAUL. And yet she found the means to stretch her arm
Into the world, from out these narrow bonds,
And, with the torch of civil war, inflame
This realm against our queen (whom God preserve),

And arm assassin bands. Did she not rouse
From out these walls the malefactor Parry,
And Babington, to the detested crime
Of regicide? And did this iron grate
Prevent her from decoying to her toils
The virtuous heart of Norfolk? Saw we not
The first, best head in all this island fall
A sacrifice for her upon the block?
[The noble house of Howard fell with him.]
And did this sad example terrify
These mad adventurers, whose rival zeal
Plunges for her into this deep abyss?
The bloody scaffold bends beneath the weight
Of her new daily victims; and we ne'er
Shall see an end till she herself, of all
The guiltiest, be offer'd up upon it.
O! curses on the day when England took
This Helen to its hospitable arms.

KEN. Did England then receive her hospitably?
O hapless queen! who since that fatal day
When first she set her foot within this realm,
And, as a suppliant — a fugitive —
Came to implore protection from her sister,
Has been condemned, despite the law of nations,
And royal privilege, to weep away
The fairest years of youth in prison walls.
And now, when she hath suffer'd everything
Which in imprisonment is hard and bitter,
Is like a felon summoned to the bar,
Foully accused, and though herself a queen,
Constrained to plead for honour and for life.

PAUL. She came amongst us as a murderess,
Chased by her very subjects from a throne
Which she had oft by vilest deeds disgrac'd.
Sworn against England's welfare came she hither
To call the times of bloody Mary back,
Betray our Church to Romish tyranny,

And sell our dear-bought liberties to France.
Say, why disdain'd she to subscribe the treaty
Of Edinburgh — to resign her claim
To England's crown — and with one single word,
Trac'd by her pen, throw wide her prison gates?
No: — she had rather live in vile confinement,
And see herself ill-treated, than renounce
The empty honours of her barren title.
Why acts she thus? Because she trusts to wiles,
And treacherous arts of base conspiracy;
And, hourly plotting schemes of mischief, hopes
To conquer, from her prison, all this isle.

KEN. You mock us, sir, and edge your cruelty
With words of bitter scorn: — that *she* should form
Such projects; *she*, who's here immured alive,
To whom no sound of comfort, not a voice
Of friendship comes from her beloved home;
Who hath so long no human face beheld,
Save her stern gaoler's unrelenting brows;
Till now, of late, in your uncourteous cousin
She sees a second keeper, and beholds
Fresh bolts and bars around her multiplied.

PAUL. No iron grate is proof against her wiles.
How do I know these bars are not fil'd through?
How that this floor, these walls, that seem so strong
Without, may not be hollow from within,
And let in felon treach'ry when I sleep?
Accursed office, that's entrusted to me,
To guard this cunning mother of all ill!
Fear scares me from my sleep; and in the night
I, like a troubled spirit, roam and try
The strength of every bolt, and put to proof
Each guard's fidelity: — I see, with fear,
The dawning of each morn, which may confirm
My apprehensions: — yet, thank God, there's hope
That all my fears will soon be at an end;
For rather would I at the gates of hell

Stand sentinel, and guard the dev'lish host
Of damned souls, than this deceitful queen.
KEN. Here comes the queen.
PAUL. Christ's image in her hand,
Pride, and all worldly lusts within her heart.

SCENE II.

The same. Enter MARY *veiled, a crucifix in her hand.*

KEN. (*hastening toward her*) O gracious queen! they tread us under foot;
No end of tyranny and base oppression;
Each coming day heaps fresh indignities,
New sufferings on thy royal head.
MARY. Be calm —
Say, what has happened?
KEN. See! thy cabinet
Is forc'd; — thy papers, — and thy only treasure,
Which with such pains we had secur'd, the last
Poor remnant of thy bridal ornaments
From France, is in his hands: — nought now remains
Of royal state — thou art indeed bereft!
MARY. Compose yourself, my Hannah! and believe me,
'Tis not these baubles which can make a queen: —
Basely indeed they may behave to us,
But they cannot debase us. I have learnt
To use myself to many a change in England;
I can support this too. Sir, you have ta'en
By force, what I this very day designed
To have deliver'd to you. There's a letter
Amongst these papers, for my royal sister
Of England — Pledge me, sir, your word of honour,
To give it to her Majesty's own hands,
And not to the deceitful care of Burleigh.

PAUL. I shall consider what is best to do.
MARY. Sir, you shall know its import. In this letter
I beg a favour, a great favour of her, —
That she herself will give me audience, — she!
Whom I have never seen. I have been summon'd
Before a court of men whom I can ne'er
Acknowledge as my peers — of men to whom
My heart denies its confidence. The queen
Is of my family, my rank, my sex;
To her alone — a sister, queen, and woman —
Can I unfold my heart.
PAUL. Too oft, my lady,
Have you entrusted both your fate and honour
To men less worthy your esteem than these.
MARY. I, in the letter, beg another favour,
And surely nought but inhumanity
Can here reject my prayer. These many years
Have I, in prison, miss'd the Church's comfort,
The blessing of the sacraments: — and she
Who robs me of my freedom and my crown,
Who seeks my very life, can never wish
To shut the gates of heaven upon my soul.
PAUL. Whene'er you wish, the dean shall wait upon you —
MARY. (*interrupting him sharply*) Talk to me not of deans. I ask the aid
Of one of my own Church — a Catholic priest.
PAUL. [That is against the published laws of England.
MARY. The laws of England are no rule for me.
I am not England's subject; I have ne'er
Consented to its laws, and will not bow
Before their cruel and despotic sway.
If 'tis your will, to the unheard-of rigour
Which I have borne, to add this new oppression,
I must submit to what your power ordains; —

Yet will I raise my voice in loud complaints.]
I also wish a public notary,
And secretaries, to prepare my will —
My sorrows, and my prison's wretchedness
Prey on my life — my days, I fear, are number'd —
I feel that I am near the gates of death.

PAUL. These serious contemplations well become you.

MARY. And know I then, that some too ready hand
May not abridge this tedious work of sorrow?
I would indite my will, and make disposal
Of what belongs to me.

PAUL. This liberty
May be allow'd to you, for England's queen
Will not enrich herself by plundering you.

MARY. I have been parted from my faithful women,
And from my servants; — tell me, where are they?
What is their fate? I can indeed dispense
At present with their service, but my heart
Will feel rejoiced to know these faithful ones
Are not exposed to suff'ring and to want!

PAUL. Your servants have been cared for; [and again
You shall behold whate'er is taken from you:
And all shall be restored in proper season.] [*Going.*

MARY. And will you leave my presence thus again,
And not relieve my fearful anxious heart
From the fell torments of uncertainty?
Thanks to the vigilance of your hateful spies,
I am divided from the world; — no voice
Can reach me through these prison-walls; — my fate
Lies in the hands of those who wish my ruin.
A month of dread suspense is pass'd already,
Since when the forty high commissioners
Surprised me in this castle, and erected,
With most unseemly haste, their dread tribunal;
They forced me, stunn'd, amaz'd, and unprepar'd,

Without an advocate, from memory,
Before their unexampled court, to answer
Their weighty charges artfully arranged.
— They came like ghosts — like ghosts they disappeared,
And since that day all mouths are clos'd to me.
In vain I seek to construe from your looks
Which hath prevail'd — my cause's innocence
And my friends' zeal — or my foes' cursed counsel.
O! break this silence — let me know the worst —
What I have still to fear, and what to hope.

PAUL. Close your accounts with Heaven.

MARY. From Heaven I hope
For mercy, sir; — and from my earthly judges
I hope, and still expect, the strictest justice.

PAUL. Justice, depend upon it, will be done you.

MARY. Is the suit ended, sir?

PAUL. I cannot tell.

MARY. Am I condemn'd?

PAUL. I cannot answer, lady.

MARY. [Sir, a good work fears not the light of day.

PAUL. The day will shine upon it, doubt it not.]

MARY. Despatch is here the fashion. Is it meant
The murderer shall surprise me, like the judges?

PAUL. Still entertain that thought, and he will find you
Better prepared to meet your fate than they did.

MARY. (*After a pause*) Sir, nothing can surprise me, which a court,
Inspired by Burleigh's hate and Hatton's zeal,
Howe'er unjust, may venture to pronounce: —
But I have yet to learn, how far the queen
Will dare in execution of the sentence.

PAUL. The sovereigns of England have no fear
But for their conscience, and their parliament.
What justice hath decreed, her fearless hand
Will execute before th' assembled world.

Scene III.

The same. Mortimer *enters, and without paying attention to the* Queen, *addresses* Paulet.

Mort. Uncle, you're sought for.

[*He retires in the same manner. The* Queen *remarks it, and turns toward* Paulet, *who is about to follow him.*

Mary. Sir, one favour more: —
If *you* have aught to say to me — from *you*
I can bear much — I rev'rence your gray hairs —
But cannot bear that young man's insolence; —
Spare me in future his unmanner'd rudeness.

Paul. I prize him most for that which makes you hate him: —
He is not, truly, one of those poor fools
Who melt before a woman's treacherous tears.
He has seen much — has been to Rheims and Paris,
And brings us back his true old English heart.
Lady, your cunning arts are lost on him. [*Exit.*

Scene IV.

Mary, Kennedy.

Ken. And dares the ruffian venture to your face
Such language! — O, 'tis hard — 'tis past endurance.

Mary. (*lost in reflection*) In the fair moments of our former splendour
We lent to flatt'rers a too willing ear; —
It is but just, good Hannah, we should now
Be forced to hear the bitter voice of censure.

Ken. So downcast, so depressed, my dearest lady!
You, who before so gay, so full of hope,

Were used to comfort me in my distress?
More gracious were the task to check your mirth
Than chide your heavy sadness.
MARY. Well I know him —
It is the bleeding Darnley's royal shade,
Rising in anger from his darksome grave:
And never will he make his peace with me
Until the measure of my woes be full.
KEN. What thoughts are these —
MARY. Thou may'st forget it, Hannah;
But I've a faithful mem'ry — 'tis this day
Another wretched anniversary
Of that regretted, that unhappy deed —
Which I must celebrate with fast and penance.
KEN. Dismiss at length in peace this evil spirit.
The penitence of many a heavy year,
Of many a suffering, has atoned the deed:
The Church, which holds the key of absolution,
Pardons the crime, and Heav'n itself's appeas'd.
MARY. This long atoned crime arises fresh
And bleeding from its lightly cover'd grave —
My husband's restless spirit seeks revenge —
No sacred bell can exorcise, no host
In priestly hands dismiss it to his tomb.
KEN. You did not murder him — 'twas done by others.
MARY. But it was known to me; — I suffer'd it,
And lured him with my smiles to death's embrace.
KEN. Your youth extenuates your guilt. You were
Of tender years.
MARY. So tender, yet I drew
This heavy guilt upon my youthful head.
KEN. You were provok'd by direst injuries,
And by the rude presumption of the man
Whom out of darkness, like the hand of Heav'n,
Your love drew forth, and raised above all others;
Whom through your bridal chamber you conducted

Up to your throne, and with your lovely self,
And your hereditary crown, distinguish'd: —
[Your work was his existence, and your grace
Bedew'd him like the gentle rains of heav'n.]
Could he forget, that his so splendid lot
Was the creation of your gen'rous love?
Yet did he, worthless as he was, forget it.
With base suspicions, and with brutal manners,
He wearied your affections, and became
An object to you of deserv'd disgust: —
Th' illusion, which till now had overcast
Your judgment, vanish'd; angrily you fled
His foul embrace, and gave him up to scorn.
And did he seek again to win your love?
Your favour? Did he e'er implore your pardon?
Or fall in deep repentance at your feet?
No; the base wretch defied you: — he, who was
Your bounty's creature, wish'd to play your king,
[And strove, through fear, to force your inclination.]
Before your eyes he had your fav'rite singer,
Poor Rizzio, murder'd: you did but avenge
With blood, the bloody deed —

MARY. And bloodily,
I fear, too soon 'twill be aveng'd on me: —
You seek to comfort me, and you condemn me.

KEN. You were, when you consented to this deed,
No more yourself — belong'd not to yourself —
The madness of a frantic love possess'd you,
And bound you to a terrible seducer,
The wretched Bothwell. That despotic man
Rul'd you with shameful, overbearing will,
And with his philters and his hellish arts
Inflamed your passions.

MARY. All the arts he used
Were man's superior strength, and woman's weakness.

KEN. No, no, I say. The most pernicious spirits
Of hell he must have summoned to his aid,

To cast this mist before your waking senses.
Your ear no more was open to the voice
Of friendly warning, and your eyes were shut
To decency; soft female bashfulness
Deserted you; those cheeks, which were before
The seat of virtuous blushing modesty,
Glow'd with the flames of unrestrain'd desire;
You cast away the veil of secrecy,
And the flagitious daring of the man
O'ercame your natural coyness: you expos'd
Your shame, unblushingly, to public gaze:
You let the murd'rer, whom the people follow'd
With curses, through the streets of Edinburgh,
Before you bear the royal sword of Scotland
In triumph. You begirt your parliament
With armed bands; and by this shameless farce,
There, in the very temple of great Justice,
You forc'd the judges of the land to clear
The murderer of his guilt. You went still farther —
O God!

MARY. Conclude — nay, pause not — say for this
I gave my hand in marriage at the altar.

KEN. O let an everlasting silence veil
That dreadful deed: the heart revolts at it,
A crime to stain the darkest criminal!
Yet you are no such lost one, that I know.
I nurs'd your youth myself — your heart is fram'd
For tender softness: 'tis alive to shame,
And all your fault is thoughtless levity.
Yes, I repeat it, there are evil spirits,
Who sudden fix in man's unguarded breast
Their fatal residence, and there delight
To act their dev'lish deeds; then hurry back
Unto their native hell, and leave behind
Remorse and horror in the poison'd bosom.
Since this misdeed, which blackens thus your life,
You have done nothing ill; your conduct has

Been pure; myself can witness your amendment.
Take courage, then; with your own heart make peace.
Whatever cause you have for penitence,
You are not guilty here. Nor England's queen,
Nor England's parliament can be your judge.
Here *might* oppresses you: you may present
Yourself before this self-created court
With all the fortitude of innocence.

MARY. I hear a step.

KEN. It is the nephew. — In.

SCENE V.

The same. Enter MORTIMER, *approaching cautiously.*

MORT. (*to* KENNEDY) Step to the door, and keep a careful watch,
I have important business with the queen.

MARY. (*with dignity*) I charge thee, Hannah, go not hence — remain.

MORT. Fear not, my gracious lady — learn to know me. [*He gives her a card.*

MARY. [*She examines it and starts back astonished.*
Heav'ns! What is this?

MORT. (*to* KENNEDY) Retire, good Kennedy;
See that my uncle comes not unawares.

MARY. (*to* KENNEDY, *who hesitates, and looks at the* QUEEN *inquiringly*)
Go in; do as he bids you.

[KENNEDY *retires with signs of wonder.*

Scene VI.

Mary, Mortimer.

Mary. From my uncle
In France — the worthy Card'nal of Lorrain?
[*She reads.*
"Confide in Mortimer, who brings you this;
You have no truer, firmer friend in England."
[*Looking at him with astonishment.*
Can I believe it? Is there no delusion
To cheat my senses? Do I find a friend
So near, when I conceiv'd myself abandon'd
By the whole world? And find that friend in you,
The nephew of my gaoler, whom I thought
My most invet'rate enemy?

Mort. (*kneeling*) O pardon,
My gracious liege, for the detested mask,
Which it has cost me pain enough to wear;
Yet through such means alone have I the pow'r
To see you, and to bring you help and rescue.

Mary. Arise, sir; you astonish me; I cannot
So suddenly emerge from the abyss
Of wretchedness to hope: let me conceive
This happiness, that I may credit it.

Mort. Our time is brief: each moment I expect
My uncle, whom a hated man attends:
Hear, then, before his terrible commission
Surprises you, how Heav'n prepares your rescue.

Mary. You come, in token of its wondrous pow'r.

Mort. Allow me of myself to speak.

Mary. Say on.

Mort. I scarce, my liege, had numbered twenty years,
Train'd in the path of strictest discipline,
And nurs'd in deadliest hate to papacy,

When led by irresistible desire
For foreign travel, I resolv'd to leave
My country and its puritanic faith
Far, far behind me: so on with rapid speed
I flew through France, and bent my eager course
On to the plains of far-famed Italy.
'Twas then the time of the great Jubilee: —
And crowds of palmers fill'd the public roads;
Each image was adorn'd with garlands; 'twas
As if all humankind were wand'ring forth
In pilgrimage toward the heav'nly kingdom.
The tide of the believing multitude
Bore me too onward with resistless force,
Into the streets of Rome. What was my wonder,
As the magnificence of stately columns
Rush'd on my sight! the vast triumphal arches,
The Colosseum's grandeur, with amazement
Struck my admiring senses; the sublime
Creative spirit held my soul a prisoner
In the fair world of wonders it had fram'd.
I ne'er had felt the power of art till now.
The Church that rear'd me hates the charms of sense;
It tolerates no image, it adores
But the unseen, the incorporeal word.
What were my feelings, then, as I approach'd
The threshold of the churches, and within
Heard heav'nly music floating in the air:
While from the walls and high-wrought roofs there
stream'd
Crowds of celestial forms in endless train —
When the Most High, Most Glorious, pervaded
My captivated sense in real presence!
And when I saw the great and godlike visions,
The Salutation, the Nativity,
The Holy Mother, and the Trinity's
Descent, the luminous Transfiguration
And last the holy Pontiff, clad in all

The glory of his office, bless the people!
O! what is all the pomp of gold and jewels
With which the kings of earth adorn themselves?
He is alone surrounded by the Godhead;
His mansion is in truth an heav'nly kingdom.
For not of earthly moulding are these forms!

MARY. O spare me, sir! No further. Spread no more
Life's verdant carpet out before my eyes,
Remember I am wretched, and a prisoner.

MORT. I was a prisoner too, my queen; but swift
My prison-gates flew open, when at once
My spirit felt its liberty and hail'd
The smiling dawn of life. I learn'd to burst
Each narrow prejudice of education,
To crown my brows with never-fading wreaths,
And mix my joy with the rejoicing crowd.
Full many noble Scots, who saw my zeal,
Encourag'd me, and with the gallant French
They kindly led me to your princely uncle,
The Cardinal of Guise. O what a man!
How firm, how clear, how manly, and how great!
Born to control the human mind at will!
The very model of a royal priest;
A ruler of the Church without an equal!

MARY. You've seen him then, — the much lov'd, honour'd man,
Who was the guardian of my tender years.
O speak of him! Does he remember me?
Does fortune favour him? And prospers still
His life? And does he still majestic stand,
A very rock and pillar of the Church?

MORT. The holy man descended from his height,
And deign'd to teach me the important creed
Of the true Church, and dissipate my doubts.
He show'd me, how the glimm'ring light of reason
Serves but to lead us to eternal error:

That what the heart is call'd on to believe,
The eye must see: that he who rules the Church
Must needs be visible; and that the Spirit
Of truth inspir'd the councils of the fathers.
How vanish'd, then, the fond imaginings
And weak conceptions of my childish soul
Before his conquering judgment, and the soft
Persuasion of his tongue! So I return'd
Back to the bosom of the holy Church,
And at his feet abjur'd my heresies.

MARY. Then of those happy thousands, you are one,
Whom he, with his celestial eloquence,
Like the immortal preacher of the mount,
Has turn'd, and led to everlasting joy!

MORT. The duties of his office call'd him soon
To France, and I was sent by him to Rheims,
Where, by the Jesuits' anxious labour, priests
Are train'd to preach our holy faith in England.
There, 'mongst the Scots, I found the noble Morgan,
And your true Lesley, Ross's learned bishop,
Who pass in France their joyless days of exile.
I join'd with heartfelt zeal these worthy men,
And fortified my faith. As I one day
Roam'd through the bishop's dwelling, I was struck
With a fair female portrait; it was full
Of touching, wond'rous charms; with magic might
It mov'd my inmost soul, and there I stood
Speechless, and overmaster'd by my feeling.
"Well," cried the bishop, "may you linger thus
In deep emotion near this lovely face!
For the most beautiful of womankind
Is also matchless in calamity.
She is a prisoner for our holy faith,
And in your native land, alas! she suffers."

[MARY *is in great agitation.* — *He pauses.*

MARY. Excellent man! All is not lost, indeed,
While such a friend remains in my misfortunes!

MORT. Then he began, with moving eloquence,
To paint the suff'rings of your martyrdom;
He showed me, then, your lofty pedigree,
And your descent from Tudor's royal house.
He prov'd to me that you alone have right
To reign in England, not this upstart queen,
The base-born fruit of an adult'rous bed,
Whom Henry's self rejected as a bastard.
[He from my eyes remov'd delusion's mist,
And taught me to lament you as a victim,
To honour you as my true queen, whom I,
Deceiv'd, like thousands of my noble fellows,
Had ever hated as my country's foe.]
I would not trust his evidence alone;
I question'd learn'd doctors; I consulted
The most authentic books of heraldry;
And every man of knowledge, whom I ask'd,
Confirm'd to me your claim's validity.
And now I know that your undoubted right
To England's throne has been your only wrong.
This realm is justly yours by heritage,
In which you innocently pine as pris'ner.

MARY. O this unhappy right! — 'tis this alone
Which is the source of all my sufferings.

MORT. Just at this time the tidings reached my ears,
Of your removal from old Talbot's charge,
And your committal to my uncle's care.
It seem'd to me that this disposal mark'd
The wondrous, outstretch'd hand of fav'ring Heaven:
It seem'd to be a loud decree of fate,
That it had chosen me to rescue you.
My friends concur with me; the cardinal
Bestows on me his counsel and his blessing,
And tutors me in the hard task of feigning.
The plan in haste digested, I commenced
My journey homewards, and ten days ago

On England's shores I landed. — Oh, my queen,
[*He pauses.*
I saw then, not your picture, but yourself —
Oh what a treasure do these walls enclose!
No prison this, but the abode of gods,
More splendid far than England's royal court.
Happy, thrice happy he, whose envied lot
Permits to breathe the selfsame air with you!
It is a prudent policy in her
To bury you so deep! All England's youth
Would rise at once in general mutiny,
And not a sword lie quiet in its sheath:
Rebellion would uprear its giant head,
Through all this peaceful isle, if Britons once
Beheld their captive queen.

MARY. 'Twere well with her
If ev'ry Briton saw her with your eyes!

MORT. Were each, like me, a witness of your wrongs,
Your meekness, and the noble fortitude
With which you suffer these indignities —
Would you not then emerge from all these trials
Like a true queen? Your prison's infamy,
Hath it despoil'd your beauty of its charms?
You are depriv'd of all that graces life,
Yet round you life and light eternal beam.
Ne'er on this threshold can I set my foot,
That my poor heart with anguish is not torn,
Not ravish'd with delight at gazing on you.
Yet fearfully the fatal time draws near,
And danger hourly growing presses on.
I can delay no longer — can no more
Conceal the dreadful news. —

MARY. My sentence then!
Is it pronounc'd? Speak freely — I can bear it.

MORT. It is pronounc'd! The two and forty judges
Have giv'n the verdict, "guilty;" and the houses

Of Lords and Commons, with the citizens
Of London, eagerly and urgently
Demand the execution of the sentence: —
The queen alone still craftily delays,
That she may be constrain'd to yield, but not
From feelings of humanity or mercy.

MARY. (*collected*) Sir, I am not surpris'd nor terrified;
I have been long prepar'd for such a message.
Too well I know my judges. After all
Their cruel treatment I can well conceive
They dare not now restore my liberty.
I know their aim: they mean to keep me here
In everlasting bondage, and to bury,
In the sepulchral darkness of my prison,
My vengeance with me, and my rightful claims.

MORT. O! no, my gracious queen; — they stop not there;
Oppression will not be content to do
Its work by halves: — as long as e'er you live,
Distrust and fear will haunt the English queen.
No dungeon can inter you deep enough;
Your death alone can make her throne secure.

MARY. Will she then dare, regardless of the shame,
Lay my crown'd head upon the fatal block?

MORT. She will most surely dare it, doubt it not.

MARY. And can she thus roll in the very dust,
Her own, and ev'ry monarch's majesty?

MORT. She thinks on nothing now but present danger.
Nor looks to that which is so far removed.

MARY. And fears she not the dread revenge of France?

MORT. With France she makes an everlasting peace;
And gives to Anjou's duke her throne and hand.

MARY. Will not the King of Spain rise up in arms?

MORT. She fears not a collected world in arms,

If with her people she remain at peace.

MARY. Were this a spectacle for British eyes?

MORT. This land, my queen, has, in these latter days,
Seen many a royal woman from the throne
Descend, and mount the scaffold: — her own mother
And Cath'rine Howard trod this fatal path;
And was not Lady Grey a crowned head?

MARY. (*after a pause*) No, Mortimer, vain fears have blinded you;
'Tis but the honest care of your true heart,
Which conjures up these empty apprehensions.
It is not, sir, the scaffold that I fear:
There are so many still and secret means,
By which her Majesty of England may
Set all my claims to rest. O, trust me, ere
An executioner is found for me,
Assassins will be hir'd to do their work.
'Tis that which makes me tremble, Mortimer:
I never lift the goblet to my lips
Without an inward shudd'ring, lest the draught
May have been mingled by my sister's love.

MORT. No: — neither open nor disguised murder
Shall e'er prevail against you: — fear no more;
All is prepar'd; — twelve nobles of the land
Are my confed'rates, and have pledg'd to-day,
Upon the Sacrament, their faith to free you,
With dauntless arm, from this captivity.
Count Aubespine, the French ambassador,
Knows of our plot, and offers his assistance:
'Tis in his palace that we hold our meetings.

MARY. You make me tremble, sir, but not for joy;
An evil boding penetrates my heart.
Know you, then, what you risk? Are you not scar'd
By Babington and Tichburn's bloody heads,
Set up as warnings upon London's bridge?
Nor by the ruin of those many victims

Who have, in such attempts, found certain death,
And only made my chains the heavier?
Fly hence, deluded, most unhappy youth!
Fly, if there yet be time for you, before
That crafty spy, Lord Burleigh, track your schemes,
And mix his traitors in your secret plots.
Fly hence: — as yet, success hath never smil'd
On Mary Stuart's champions.

MORT. I'm not scar'd
By Babington and Tichburn's bloody heads,
Set up as warnings upon London's bridge;
Nor by the ruin of those many victims
Who have, in such attempts, found certain death:
They also found therein immortal honour,
And death, in rescuing you, is dearest bliss.

MARY. It is in vain: nor force nor guile can save me: —
My enemies are watchful, and the pow'r
Is in their hands. It is not Paulet only
And his dependent host; all England guards
My prison gates; Elizabeth's free will
Alone can open them.

MORT. Expect not that.

MARY. One man alone on earth can open them.

MORT. O! let me know his name!

MARY. Lord Leicester.

MORT. He!

[*Starts back in wonder.*

The Earl of Leicester! Your most bloody foe,
The fav'rite of Elizabeth! — through him —

MARY. If I am to be sav'd at all, 'twill be
Through him and him alone. Go to him, sir;
Freely confide in him: and, as a proof
You come from me, present this paper to him.

[*She takes a paper from her bosom;* MORTIMER *draws back, and hesitates to take it.*

It doth contain my portrait: — take it, sir;

I've borne it long about me: but your uncle's
Close watchfulness has cut me off from all
Communication with him; — you were sent
By my good angel. [*He takes it.*
MORT. O, my queen! explain
This mystery.
MARY. Lord Leicester will resolve it.
Confide in him, and he'll confide in you.
Who comes?
KENNEDY. (*entering hastily*) 'Tis Paulet; and he brings with him
A nobleman from court.
MORT. It is Lord Burleigh.
Collect yourself, my queen, and strive to hear
The news he brings, with equanimity.
[*He retires through a side door, and* KENNEDY *follows him.*

SCENE VII

Enter LORD BURLEIGH, *and* PAULET.

PAUL. (*to* MARY) You wish'd to-day assurance of your fate;
My Lord of Burleigh brings it to you now;
Hear it with resignation, as beseems you.
MARY. I hope with dignity, as it becomes
My innocence, and my exalted station.
BUR. I come deputed from the court of justice.
MARY. Lord Burleigh lends that court his willing tongue,
Which was already guided by his spirit.
PAUL. You speak as if no stranger to the sentence.
MARY. Lord Burleigh brings it; therefore do I know it.
PAUL. [It would become you better, Lady Stuart,
To listen less to hatred.

MARY. I but name
My enemy: I said not that I hate him.]
But to the matter, sir.
BUR. You have acknowledg'd
The jurisdiction of the two and forty.
MARY. My lord, excuse me, if I am oblig'd
So soon to interrupt you. I acknowledg'd,
Say you, the competence of the commission?
I never have acknowledg'd it, my lord;
How could I so? I could not give away
My own prerogative, th' entrusted rights
Of my own people, the inheritance
Of my own son, and ev'ry monarch's honour.
[The very laws of England say I could not.]
It is enacted by the English laws,
That ev'ry one who stands arraign'd of crime
Shall plead before a jury of his equals:
Who is my equal in this high commission?
Kings only are my peers.
BUR. But yet you heard
The points of accusation, answer'd them
Before the court —
MARY. 'Tis true, I was deceiv'd
By Hatton's crafty counsel: — he advis'd me,
For my own honour, and in confidence
In my good cause, and my most strong defence,
To listen to the points of accusation,
And prove their falsehood. *This*, my lord, I did
From personal respect for the lords' names,
Not their usurped charge, which I disclaim.
BUR. Acknowledge you the court, or not, that is
Only a point of mere formality,
Which cannot here arrest the course of justice.
You breathe the air of England; you enjoy
The law's protection, and its benefits;
You therefore are its subject.
MARY. Sir, I breathe

The air within an English prison walls: —
Is that to live in England; to enjoy
Protection from its laws? I scarcely know
And never have I pledg'd my faith to keep them.
I am no member of this realm; I am
An independent, and a foreign queen.

BUR. And do you think that the mere name of queen
Can serve you as a charter to foment
In other countries, with impunity,
This bloody discord? Where would be the state's
Security, if the stern sword of justice
Could not as freely smite the guilty brow
Of the imperial stranger, as the beggar's?

MARY. I do not wish to be exempt from judgment,
It is the judges only I disclaim.

BUR. The judges? How now, madam! Are they then
Base wretches, snatch'd at hazard from the crowd?
Vile wranglers, that make sale of truth and justice;
Oppression's willing hirelings, and its tools?
Are they not all the foremost of this land,
Too independent to be else than honest,
And too exalted not to soar above
The fear of kings, or base servility?
Are they not those who rule a gen'rous people
In liberty and justice; men whose names
I need but mention, to dispel each doubt,
Each mean suspicion which is rais'd against them?
Stands not the rev'rend primate at their head,
The pious shepherd of his faithful people,
The learned Talbot, keeper of the seals,
And Howard, who commands our conqu'ring fleets?
Say, then, could England's sovereign do more
Than, out of all the monarchy, elect
The very noblest, and appoint them judges
In this great suit? And were it probable

That party hatred could corrupt *one* heart;
Can forty chosen men unite to speak
A sentence just as passion gives command?

MARY. (*after a short pause*) I am struck dumb by that tongue's eloquence,
Which ever was so ominous to me.
And how shall I, a weak, untutor'd woman,
Cope with so subtle, learn'd an orator?
Yes, truly; were these lords as you describe them,
I must be mute; my cause were lost indeed,
Beyond all hope, if they pronounc'd me guilty.
But, sir, these names, which you are pleas'd to praise,
These very men, whose weight you think will crush me,
I see performing in the history
Of these dominions very different parts:
I see this high nobility of England,
This grave majestic senate of the realm,
Like to an Eastern monarch's vilest slaves,
Flatter my Uncle Henry's sultan fancies:
I see this noble rev'rend House of Lords,
Venal alike with the corrupted Commons,
Make statutes and annul them, ratify
A marriage and dissolve it, as the voice
Of power commands: to-day it disinherits,
And brands the royal daughters of the realm
With the vile name of bastards, and to-morrow
Crowns them as queens, and leads them to the throne.
I see them in four reigns, with pliant conscience,
Four times abjure their faith; renounce the Pope
With Henry, yet retain the old belief;
Reform themselves with Edward; hear the mass
Again with Mary; with Elizabeth,
Who governs now, reform themselves again.

BUR. You say you are not vers'd in England's laws.
You seem well read, methinks, in her disasters.

MARY. And these men are my judges?
[*As* LORD BURLEIGH *seems to wish to speak.*

My lord treas'rer,
Tow'rd you I will be just, be you but just
To me. — 'Tis said, that you consult with zeal
The good of England, and of England's queen;
Are honest, watchful, indefatigable:
I will believe it. Not your private ends,
Your sovereign and your country's weal alone,
Inspire your counsels and direct your deeds.
Therefore, my noble lord, you should the more
Distrust your heart; should see that you mistake not
The welfare of the government, for justice.
I do not doubt, besides yourself, there are
Among my judges many upright men:
But they are Protestants, are eager all
For England's quiet, and they sit in judgment
On me, the Queen of Scotland, and the papist.
It is an ancient saying, that the Scots
And English to each other are unjust;
And hence the rightful custom that a Scot
Against an Englishman, or Englishman
Against a Scot, cannot be heard in judgment.
Necessity prescrib'd this cautious law;
Deep policy oft lies in ancient customs:
My lord, we must respect them. Nature cast
Into the ocean these two fiery nations
Upon this plank, and she divided it
Unequally, and bade them fight for it.
The narrow bed of Tweed alone divides
These daring spirits; often hath the blood
Of the contending parties dyed its waves.
Threat'ning, and sword in hand, these thousand years,
From both its banks they watch their rival's motions,
Most vigilant and true confederates,
With ev'ry en'my of the neighbour state.
No foe oppresses England, but the Scot
Becomes his firm ally; no civil war
Inflames the towns of Scotland, but the English

Add fuel to the fire: this raging hate
Will never be extinguish'd till, at last,
One parliament in concord shall unite them,
One common sceptre rule throughout the isle.
BUR. And from a Stuart, then, should England hope
This happiness?
MARY. Oh! why should I deny it?
Yes, I confess, I cherish'd the fond hope.
I thought myself the happy instrument
To join in freedom, 'neath the olive's shade,
Two gen'rous realms in lasting happiness!
I little thought I should become the victim
Of their old hate, their long-liv'd jealousy,
And the sad flames of that unhappy strife,
I hop'd at last to smother, and for ever:
And, as my ancestor, great Richmond, join'd
The rival roses after bloody contest,
To join in peace the Scotch and English crowns.
BUR. An evil way you took to this good end,
To set the realm on fire, and through the flames
Of civil war to strive to mount the throne.
MARY. I wish'd not that:—I wish'd it not, by Heaven!
When did I strive at that?—Where are your proofs?
BUR. I came not hither to dispute; your cause
Is no more subject to a war of words.
The great majority of forty voices
Hath found that you have contraven'd the law
Last year enacted, and have now incurr'd
Its penalty. [*Producing the verdict.*
MARY. Upon this statute, then,
My lord, is built the verdict of my judges?
BUR. (*reading*) Last year it was enacted, "If a plot
Henceforth should rise in England, in the name
Or for the benefit of any claimant

To England's crown, that justice should be done
On such pretender, and the guilty party
Be prosecuted unto death." Now, since
It has been prov'd —
MARY. Lord Burleigh, I can well
Imagine that a law expressly aim'd
At me, and fram'd to compass my destruction,
May to my prejudice be used. O! woe
To the unhappy victim, when the tongue,
That frames the law, shall execute the sentence.
Can you deny it, sir, that this same statute
Was made for my destruction, and nought else?
BUR. It should have acted as a warning to you:
By your imprudence it became a snare.
You saw the precipice which yawn'd before you;
Yet, truly warn'd, you plung'd into the deep.
With Babington, the traitor, and his bands
Of murderous companions, were you leagued.
You knew of all, and from your prison led
Their treasonous plottings with a deep-laid plan.
MARY. When did I that, my lord? Let them produce
The documents.
BUR. You have already seen them:
They were, before the court, presented to you.
MARY. Mere copies written by another hand;
Show me the proof that they were dictated
By me, that they proceeded from my lips,
And in those very terms in which you read them.
BUR. Before his execution, Babington
Confess'd they were the same which he receiv'd.
MARY. Why was he in his lifetime not produc'd
Before my face? Why was he then despatch'd
So quickly, that he could not be confronted
With her whom he accus'd?
BUR. Besides, my lady,
Your secretaries, Curl and Nau, declare

On oath, they are the very selfsame letters
Which, from your lips, they faithfully transcrib'd.
MARY. And on my menials' testimony, then,
I am condemn'd; upon the word of those
Who have betray'd me, *me*, their rightful queen,
Who in that very moment, when they came
As witnesses against me, broke their faith!
BUR. You said yourself, you held your countryman
To be an upright conscientious man.
MARY. I thought him such; but 'tis the hour of danger
Alone, which tries the virtue of a man.
[He ever was an honest man, but weak
In understanding; and his subtle comrade,
Whose faith, observe, I never answer'd for,
Might easily seduce him to write down
More than he should;] the rack may have compell'd him
To say and to confess more than he knew.
He hop'd to save himself by this false witness,
And thought it could not injure *me* — a queen.
BUR. The oath he swore was free and unconstrain'd.
MARY. But not before my face! How now, my lord,
The witnesses you name are still alive,
Let them appear against me, face to face!
And there repeat what they have testified!
Why am I then denied that privilege,
That right, which e'en the murderer enjoys?
I know from Talbot's mouth, my former keeper,
That in this reign a statute has been pass'd,
Which orders that the plaintiff be confronted
With the defendant; is it so, good Paulet?
I e'er have known you as an honest man,
Now prove it to me; tell me, on your conscience,
If such a law exist, or not, in England?

PAUL. Madam, there does: that is the law in England.
I must declare the truth.
MARY. Well then, my lord,
If I am treated by the law of England
So hardly, when that law oppresses me,
Say, why avoid this selfsame country's law,
When 'tis for my advantage? Answer me;
Why was not Babington confronted with me?
Why not my servants, who are both alive?
BUR. Be not so hasty, lady; 'tis not only
Your plot with Babington —
MARY. 'Tis that alone
Which arms the law against me; that alone
From which I'm call'd upon to clear myself.
Stick to the point, my lord; evade it not.
BUR. It has been prov'd that you have corresponded
With the Ambassador of Spain, Mendoza —
MARY. Stick to the point, my lord.
BUR. That you have form'd
Conspiracies to overturn the fix'd
Religion of the realm; that you have call'd
Into this kingdom foreign pow'rs, and rous'd
All kings in Europe to a war with England.
MARY. And were it so, my lord — though I deny it —
But e'en suppose it were so: I am kept
Imprison'd here against all laws of nations.
I came not into England sword in hand;
I came a suppliant; and at the hands
Of my imperial kinswoman, I claim'd
The sacred rights of hospitality.
When power seized upon me, and prepared
To rivet fetters, where I hop'd protection.
Say, is my conscience bound, then, to this realm?
What are the duties that I owe to England?
I should but exercise a sacred right,

Deriv'd from sad necessity, if I
Warr'd with these bonds, encounter'd might with might,
Roused and incited ev'ry state in Europe,
For my protection, to unite in arms.
Whatever in a rightful war is just
And loyal, 'tis my right to exercise:
Murder alone, the secret bloody deed,
My conscience and my pride alike forbid.
Murder would stain me, would dishonour me:
Dishonour me, my lord! — but not condemn me,
Nor subject me to England's courts of law:
For 'tis not justice, but mere violence,
Which is the question 'tween myself and England.

BUR. (*significantly*) Talk not, my lady, of the dreadful right
Of pow'r: 'tis seldom on the pris'ner's side.

MARY. I am the weak; she is the mighty one
'Tis well, my lord; let her then use her pow'r;
Let her destroy me: let me bleed, that she
May live secure: but let her then confess
That she hath exercised her pow'r alone,
And not contaminate the name of justice.
Let her not borrow, from the laws, the sword
To rid her of her hated enemy:
Let her not clothe, in this religious garb,
The bloody daring of licentious might:
Let not these juggling tricks deceive the world. —
[*Returning the sentence.*
Though she may murder me, she cannot judge me: —
Let her no longer strive to join the fruits
Of vice with virtue's fair and angel show;
But let her dare to seem the thing she is. [*Exit.*

Scene VIII.

Burleigh, Paulet.

Bur. She scorns us, she defies us! will defy us,
Ev'n at the scaffold's foot. This haughty heart
Is not to be subdued. Say, did the sentence
Surprise her? Did you see her shed one tear,
Or even change her colour? She disdains
To make appeal to our compassion. Well
She knows the wav'ring mind of England's queen.
Our apprehensions make her bold.
Paul. My lord,
Take the pretext away which buoys it up,
And you shall see this proud defiance fail
That very moment. I must say, my lord,
Irregularities have been allowed
In these proceedings; Babington and Ballard
Should have been brought, with her two secretaries,
Before her, face to face.
Bur. No, Paulet, no!
That was not to be risk'd; her influence
Upon the human heart is too supreme;
Too strong the female empire of her tears.
Her secretary, Curl, if brought before her,
And call'd upon to speak the weighty word
On which her life depends, would straight shrink back
And fearfully revoke his own confession.
Paul. Then England's enemies will fill the world
With evil rumours; and the formal pomp
Of these proceedings, to the minds of all,
Will only signalise an act of outrage.
Bur. That is the greatest torment of our queen,
[That she can never 'scape the blame. O God!]
Had but this lovely mischief died before
She set her faithless foot on English ground!

PAUL. Amen, say I!
BUR. Had sickness but consum'd her!
PAUL. England had been secur'd from much misfortune.
BUR. And yet, if she had died in nature's course,
The world would still have call'd us murderers.
PAUL. 'Tis true, the world will think, despite of us,
Whate'er it list.
BUR. Yet could it not be prov'd?
And it would make less noise.
PAUL. Why, let it make
What noise it may. It is not clam'rous blame,
'Tis righteous censure only, which can wound.
BUR. We know that holy justice cannot 'scape
The voice of censure; and the public cry
Is ever on the side of the unhappy:
Envy pursues the laurell'd conqueror;
The sword of justice, which adorns the man,
Is hateful in a woman's hand; the world
Will give no credit to a woman's justice,
If woman be the victim. Vain that we,
The judges, spoke what conscience dictated;
She has the royal privilege of mercy;
She *must* exert it: 'twere not to be borne,
Should she let justice take its full career.
PAUL. And therefore —
BUR. Therefore should she live? O! no,
She must not live; it must not be. 'Tis this,
Ev'n this, my friend, which so disturbs the queen,
And scares all slumber from her couch; I read
Her soul's distracting contest in her eyes;
She fears to speak her wishes, yet her looks,
Her silent looks, significantly ask,
"Is there not one amongst my many servants,
To save me from this sad alternative?
Either to tremble in eternal fear
Upon my throne, or else to sacrifice

A queen of my own kindred on the block?"
PAUL. 'Tis even so; nor can it be avoided —
BUR. Well might it be avoided, thinks the queen,
If she had only more attentive servants.
PAUL. How more attentive?
BUR. Such as could interpret
A silent mandate.
PAUL. What? A silent mandate!
BUR. Who, when a pois'nous adder is deliver'd
Into their hands, would keep the treach'rous charge
As if it were a sacred, precious jewel?
PAUL. A precious jewel is the queen's good name,
And spotless reputation: good, my lord,
One cannot guard it with sufficient care.
BUR. When, out of Shrewsb'ry's hand, the Queen of Scots
Was trusted to Sir Amias Paulet's care,
The meaning was —
PAUL. I hope to God, my lord,
The meaning was, to give the weightiest charge
Into the purest hands: my lord, my lord!
By Heav'n, I had disdain'd this bailiff's office,
Had I not thought the service claim'd the care
Of the best man that England's realm can boast.
Let me not think I am indebted for it
To any thing but my unblemish'd name.
BUR. Spread the report, she wastes; grows sicker still,
And sicker; and expires at last in peace;
Thus will she perish in the world's remembrance,
And your good name is pure.
PAUL. But not my conscience.
BUR. Though you refuse us, sir, your own assistance,
You will not, sure, prevent another's hand.
PAUL. No murd'rer's foot shall e'er approach her threshold,

Whilst she's protected by my household gods.
Her life's a sacred trust; to me the head
Of Queen Elizabeth is not more sacred.
Ye are the judges; judge, and break the staff;
And when 'tis time, then let the carpenter,
With axe and saw appear to build the scaffold,
My castle's portals shall be open to him,
The sheriff and the executioners:
Till then, she is intrusted to my care;
And, be assur'd, I will fulfil my trust,
She shall not *do*, nor *suffer* what's unjust. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

Scene I.

London; a Hall in the Palace of Westminster.

The Earl of Kent *and* Sir William Davison, *meeting.*

Dav. Is that my Lord of Kent? So soon return'd?
Is then the tourney, the carousal over?
Kent. How now? Were you not present at the tilt?
Dav. My office kept me here.
Kent. Believe me, sir,
You've lost the fairest show which ever taste
Devis'd, or graceful dignity perform'd:
For beauty's virgin fortress was presented,
As by *Desire* invested; the earl marshal,
The lord high admiral, and ten other knights,
Belonging to the queen, defended it,
And France's cavaliers led the attack.
A herald march'd before the gallant troop,
And summon'd, in a madrigal, the fortress;

And from the walls the chancellor replied;
And then th' artillery was play'd, and nosegays,
Breathing delicious fragrance, were discharg'd
From neat field-pieces; but in vain, the storm
Was valiantly resisted, and *Desire*
Was forc'd, unwillingly, to raise the siege.

DAV. A sign of evil boding, good my lord,
For the French suitors.

KENT. Why, you know that this
Was but in sport; when the attack's in earnest,
The fortress will, no doubt, capitulate.

DAV. Ha! think you so? I never can believe it.

KENT. The hardest article of all is now
Adjusted, and acceded to by France;
The Duke of Anjou is content to hold
His holy worship in a private chapel,
And openly he promises to honour
And to protect the realm's establish'd faith.
Had you but heard the people's joyful shouts
Where'er the tidings spread, for it has been
The country's constant fear the queen might die,
Without immediate issue of her body;
And England bear again the Romish chains,
If Mary Stuart should ascend the throne.

DAV. This fear appears superfluous; she goes
Into the bridal chamber; Mary Stuart
Enters the gates of death.

KENT. The queen approaches.

Scene II.

Enter Elizabeth, *led in by* Leicester, Count Aubespine, Bellievre, Lord Shrewsbury *and* Burleigh, *with other French and English gentlemen.*

Eliz. (*to* Aubespine) Count, I am sorry for these noblemen,
Whose gallant zeal hath brought them over sea
To visit these our shores, that they, with us,
Must miss the splendour of St. Germain's court.
Such pompous festivals of godlike state
I cannot furnish, as the royal court
Of France. A sober and contented people,
Which crowd around me with a thousand blessings,
Whene'er in public I present myself:
This is the spectacle which I can show,
And not without some pride, to foreign eyes.
The splendour of the noble dames who bloom
In Cath'rine's beauteous garden would, I know,
Eclipse myself, and my more modest merits.

Aub. The court of England has one lady only
To show the wond'ring foreign; but all
That charms our hearts in the accomplish'd sex
Is seen united in her single person.

Bel. Great Majesty of England, suffer us
To take our leave, and to our royal master,
The Duke of Anjou, bring the happy news.
The hot impatience of his heart would not
Permit him to remain at Paris; he
At Amiens awaits the joyful tidings;
And thence to Calais reach his posts, to bring
With winged swiftness to his tranced ear
The sweet consent which, still we humbly hope,
Your royal lips will graciously pronounce.

Eliz. Press me no further now, Count Bellievre,

It is not now a time, I must repeat,
To kindle here the joyful marriage torch.
The heav'ns low'r black and heavy o'er this land;
And weeds of mourning would become me better
Than the magnificence of bridal robes.
A fatal blow is aim'd against my heart;
A blow which threatens to oppress my house.
BEL. We only ask your Majesty to promise
Your royal hand when brighter days shall come.
ELIZ. Monarchs are but the slaves of their condition;
They dare not hear the dictates of their hearts.
My wish was ever to remain unmarried,
And I had plac'd my greatest pride in this,
That men hereafter on my tomb might read
"Here rests the virgin queen." But my good subjects
Are not content that this should be: they think,
E'en now they often think, upon the time
When I shall be no more. 'Tis not enough
That blessings now are shower'd upon this land;
They ask a sacrifice for future welfare,
And I must offer up my liberty,
My virgin liberty, my greatest good,
To satisfy my people. Thus they'd force
A lord and master on me. 'Tis by this
I see that I am nothing but a woman
In their regard; and yet methought that I
Had govern'd like a man, and like a king.
Well wot I that it is not serving God,
To quit the laws of nature; and that those
Who here have rul'd before me merit praise,
That they have op'd the cloister gates, and giv'n
Thousands of victims of ill-taught devotion
Back to the duties of humanity.
But yet a queen, who hath not spent her days
In fruitless, idle contemplation; who,
Without a murmur, indefatigably,

Performs the hardest of all duties; *she*
Should be exempted, from that natural law
Which doth ordain one-half of humankind
Shall ever be subservient to the other.

AUB. Great queen, you have upon your throne done honour
To ev'ry virtue; nothing now remains,
But to the sex, whose greatest boast you are,
To be the leading star, and give the great
Example of its most consistent duties.
'Tis true, the man exists not who deserves
That you to him should sacrifice your freedom:
Yet if a hero's soul, descent, and rank,
And manly beauty can make mortal man
Deserving of this honour —

ELIZ. Without doubt,
My lord ambassador, a marriage union
With France's royal son would do me honour:
Yes, I acknowledge it without disguise,
If it must be, if I cannot prevent it,
If I must yield unto my people's prayers,
And much I fear they will o'erpower me,
I do not know, in Europe, any prince
To whom with less reluctance I would yield
My greatest treasure, my dear liberty.
Let this confession satisfy your master.

BEL. It gives the *fairest* hope, and yet it gives,
Nothing *but* hope; my master wishes more.

ELIZ. What wishes he?

[*She takes a ring from her finger, and thoughtfully examines it.*

In this a queen has not
One privilege above all other women.
This common token marks one common duty,
One common servitude; the ring denotes
Marriage; and 'tis of rings a chain is form'd.
Convey this present to his Highness; 'tis

As yet no chain, it binds me not as yet,
But out of it may grow a link to bind me.
BEL. (*kneeling*) This present, in his name, upon my knees,
I do receive, great queen, and press the kiss
Of homage on the hand of her who is
Henceforth my princess.
ELIZ. (*to the* EARL OF LEICESTER, *whom she, during the last speeches, had continually regarded*)
By your leave, my lord.
[*She takes the blue riband from his neck,*[1] *and invests* BELLIEVRE *with it.*
Invest his Highness with this ornament,
As I invest you with it, and receive you
Into the duties of my gallant order.
And, "Honi soit qui mal y pense." Thus perish
All jealousy between our several realms,
And let the bond of confidence unite,
Henceforth, the crowns of Britain and of France.
BEL. Most sov'reign queen, this is a day of joy;
O that it could be so for all, and no
Afflicted heart within this island mourn.
See! mercy beams upon thy radiant brow;
Let the reflection of its cheering light
Fall on a wretched princess, who concerns
Britain and France alike.
ELIZ. No further, count!
Let us not mix two inconsistent things;
If France be truly anxious for my hand,
It must partake my interests, and renounce
Alliance with my foes.
AUB. In thine own eyes
Would she not seem to act unworthily,
If, in this joyous treaty, she forgot

[1] Till the time of Charles the First, the Knights of the Garter wore the blue riband with the George, about their necks, as they still do the collars on great days. — TRANSLATOR.

This hapless queen, the widow of her king;
In whose behalf, her honour and her faith
Are bound to plead for grace?
ELIZ. Thus urged, I know
To rate this intercession at its worth;
France has discharged her duties as a friend,
I will fulfil my own as England's queen.
[*She bows to the French Ambassadors, who, with the other Gentlemen, retire respectfully.*

SCENE III.

Enter BURLEIGH, LEICESTER, *and* TALBOT. *The* QUEEN *takes her seat.*

BUR. Illustrious sovereign, thou crown'st to-day
The fervent wishes of thy people: now
We can rejoice in the propitious days
Which thou bestow'st upon us; and we look
No more with fear and trembling tow'rds the time
Which, charg'd with storms, futurity presented.
Now, but one only care disturbs this land;
It is a sacrifice which every voice
Demands; O! grant but this, and England's peace
Will be establish'd now and evermore.
ELIZ. What wish they still, my lord? Speak.
BUR. They demand
The Stuart's head. If to thy people thou
Wouldst now secure the precious boon of freedom,
And the fair light of truth so dearly won,
Then she must die: if we are not to live
In endless terror for thy precious life,
The enemy must fall: for well thou know'st,
That all thy Britons are not true alike:
Romish idolatry has still its friends
In secret, in this island, who foment

The hatred of our enemies. Their hearts
All turn towards this Stuart; they are leagu'd
With the two plotting brothers of Lorrain,
The foes invet'rate of thy house and name.
'Gainst thee this raging faction hath declar'd
A war of desolation, which they wage
With the deceitful instruments of hell.
At Rheims, the cardinal archbishop's see,
There is the arsenal, from which they dart
These lightnings; *there* the school of regicide;
Thence, in a thousand shapes disguis'd, are sent
Their secret missionaries to this isle;
Their bold and daring zealots; for from *thence*,
Have we not seen the third assassin come?
And inexhausted is the direful breed
Of secret enemies in *this* abyss.
While in her castle sits, at Fotheringay,
The *Até*[1] of this everlasting war,
Who, with the torch of love, spreads flames around;
For her who sheds delusive hopes on all,
Youth dedicates itself to certain death;
To set her free is the pretence — the aim
Is to establish her upon the throne.
For this accursed house of Guise denies

[1] The picture of Até, the goddess of mischief, we are acquainted with from Homer, Il. v. 91, 130. I. 501. She is a daughter of Jupiter, and eager to prejudice every one, even the immortal gods. She counteracted Jupiter himself, on which account he seized her by her beautiful hair, and hurled her from heaven to the earth, where she now, striding over the heads of men, excites them to evil, in order to involve them in calamity. — *Herder*.

Shakespeare has, in "Julius Cæsar," made a fine use of this image:

> "And Cæsar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
> With Até by his side, come hot from hell,
> Shall in these confines, with a monarch's voice,
> Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war."

I need not point out to the reader the beautiful propriety of introducing this evil spirit on this occasion. — TRANSLATOR.

Thy sacred right; and in their mouths thou art
A robber of the throne, whom chance has crown'd.
By them this thoughtless woman was deluded,
Proudly to style herself the Queen of England:
No peace can be with her, and with her house;
[Their hatred is too bloody, and their crimes
Too great;] thou must resolve to strike, or suffer;—
Her life is death to thee, her death thy life.

ELIZ. My lord, you bear a melancholy office:
I know the purity which guides your zeal,
The solid wisdom which informs your speech:
And yet I hate this wisdom, when it calls
For blood, I hate it in my inmost soul.
Think of a milder counsel — Good, my Lord
Of Shrewsbury, we crave your judgment here.

TAL. [Desire you but to know, most gracious queen,]
[What is for your advantage, I can add
Nothing to what my lord high treasurer
Has urged; then, for your welfare, let the sentence
Be now confirm'd — this much is prov'd already:
There is no surer method to avert
The danger from your head, and from the state.
Should you in this reject our true advice,
You can dismiss your council. We are plac'd
Here as your counsellors, but to consult
The welfare of this land, and with our knowledge,
And our experience, we are bound to serve you!
But in what's good and just, most gracious queen,
You have no need of counsellors, your conscience
Knows it full well, and it is written there.
Nay, it were overstepping our commission
If we attempted to instruct you in it.

ELIZ. Yet speak, my worthy Lord of Shrewsbury,
'Tis not our understanding fails alone,
Our heart too feels it wants some sage advice.]

TAL. Well did you praise the upright zeal which fires

Lord Burleigh's loyal breast; my bosom too,
Although my tongue be not so eloquent,
Beats with no weaker, no less faithful pulse.
Long may you live, my queen, to be the joy
Of your delighted people, to prolong
Peace and its envied blessings in this realm.
Ne'er hath this isle beheld such happy days
Since it was govern'd by its native kings.
O let it never buy its happiness
With its good name; at least, may Talbot's eyes
Be clos'd in death, e'er this shall come to pass.

ELIZ. Forbid it, Heaven, that our good name be stain'd.

TAL. Then must you find some other way than this
To save thy kingdom, for the sentence pass'd
Of death against the Stuart is unjust.
You cannot upon her pronounce a sentence,
Who is not subject to you.

ELIZ. Then, it seems,
My council and my parliament have err'd;
Each bench of justice in the land is wrong,
Which did, with one accord, admit this right.

TAL. (*after a pause*) The proof of justice lies not in the voice
Of numbers; England's not the world, nor is
Thy parliament the focus which collects
The vast opinion of the human race.
This present England is no more the future,
Than 'tis the past; as inclination changes,
Thus ever ebbs and flows the unstable tide
Of public judgment. Say not then, that thou
Must act as stern necessity compels,
That thou must yield to the importunate
Petitions of thy people; ev'ry hour
Thou canst experience that thy will is free.
Make trial, and declare thou hatest blood,
And that thou wilt protect thy sister's life;

Show those who wish to give thee other counsels,
That *here* thy royal anger is not feign'd,
And thou shalt see how stern necessity
Can vanish, and what once was titled justice
Into injustice be converted: thou
Thyself must pass the sentence, thou alone: —
Trust not to this unsteady, trembling reed,
But hear the gracious dictates of thy heart.
God hath not planted rigour in the frame
Of woman; and the founders of this realm,
Who to the female hand have not denied
The reins of government, intend by this
To show that mercy, not severity,
Is the best virtue to adorn a crown.

ELIZ. Lord Shrewsb'ry is a fervent advocate
For mine, and England's enemy; I must
Prefer those counsellors who wish *my* welfare.

TAL. Her advocates have an invidious task!
None will, by speaking in her favour, dare
To meet thy anger: suffer, then, an old
And faithful counsellor (whom nought on earth
Can tempt, on the grave's brink) to exercise
The pious duty of humanity.
It never shall be said, that, in thy council,
Passion and interest could find a tongue,
While mercy's pleading voice alone was mute;
All circumstances have conspir'd against her,
Thou ne'er hast seen her face, and nothing speaks
Within thy breast for one that's stranger to thee.
I do not take the part of her misdeeds;
They say 'twas she who plann'd her husband's murder:
'Tis true that she espous'd his murderer.
A grievous crime, no doubt; but then it happen'd
In darksome days of trouble and dismay,
In the stern agony of civil war,
When she, a woman, helpless and hemm'd in
By a rude crowd of rebel vassals, sought

Protection in a powerful chieftain's arms.
God knows what arts were used to overcome her!
For woman is a weak and fragile thing.

ELIZ. Woman's not weak; there are heroic souls
Among the sex; and, in my presence, sir,
I do forbid to speak of woman's weakness.

TAL. Misfortune was for thee a rigid school;
Thou wast not station'd on the sunny side
Of life; thou saw'st no throne, from far, before thee;
The grave was gaping for thee at thy feet.
At Woodstock, and in London's gloomy tower,
'Twas *there* the gracious Father of this land
Taught thee to know thy duty, by misfortune.
No flatt'rer sought thee there: there learn'd thy soul,
Far from the noisy world and its distractions,
To commune with itself, to think apart,
And estimate the real goods of life.
No God protected this poor sufferer:
Transplanted in her early youth to France,
The court of levity and thoughtless joys,
There, in the round of constant dissipation,
She never heard the earnest voice of truth;
She was deluded by the glare of vice,
And driven onward by the stream of ruin.
Hers was the vain possession of a face,
And she outshone all others of her sex
As far in beauty, as in noble birth.

ELIZ. Collect yourself, my Lord of Shrewsbury;
Bethink you we are met in solemn council.
Those charms must surely be without compare
Which can engender, in an elder's blood,
Such fire. My Lord of Leicester, you alone
Are silent; does the subject which has made
Him eloquent, deprive you of your speech?

LEIC. Amazement ties my tongue, my queen, to think
That they should fill thy soul with such alarms,

And that the idle tales, which, in the streets
Of London, terrify the people's ears,
Should reach th' enlighten'd circle of thy council,
And gravely occupy our statesmen's minds.
Astonishment possesses me, I own,
To think this lackland Queen of Scotland, she
Who could not save her own poor throne, the jest
Of her own vassals, and her country's refuse,
[Who in her fairest days of freedom was
But thy despised puppet,] should become
At once thy terror when a prisoner.
What, in Heaven's name, can make her formidable?
That she lays claim to England? that the Guises
Will not acknowledge thee as queen? [Did then
Thy people's loyal fealty await
These Guises' approbation?] Can these Guises
With their objections, ever shake the right
Which birth hath giv'n thee; which, with one consent
The votes of parliament have ratified?
And is not she, by Henry's will, pass'd o'er
In silence? Is it probable that England,
And yet so bless'd in the new light's enjoyment,
Should throw itself into this papist's arms?
From thee, the sov'reign it adores, desert
To Darnley's murderess? What will they then,
These restless men, who even in thy lifetime
Torment thee with a successor; who cannot
Dispose of thee in marriage soon enough
To rescue Church and state from fancied peril?
Stand'st thou not blooming there in youthful prime,
While each step leads her tow'rd th' expecting tomb?
By Heavens, I hope thou wilt full many a year
Walk o'er the Stuart's grave, and ne'er become
Thyself the instrument of her sad end.

BUR. Lord Leicester hath not always held this tone.

LEIC. 'Tis true, I in the court of justice gave
My verdict for her death; here, in the council,

I may consistently speak otherwise:
Here, right is not the question, but advantage.
Is this a time to feel her power, when France,
Her only succour, has abandon'd her?
When thou preparest with thy hand to bless
The royal son of France, when the fair hope
Of a new, glorious stem of sovereigns
Begins again to blossom in this land?
Why hasten then her death? She's dead already.
Contempt and scorn are death to her; take heed
Lest ill-tim'd pity call her into life.
'Tis therefore my advice to leave the sentence,
By which her life is forfeit, in full force.
Let her live on; but let her live beneath
The headsman's axe, and, from the very hour
One arm is lifted for her, let it fall.

ELIZ. (*rises*) My lords, I now have heard your sev'ral thoughts,
And give my ardent thanks for this your zeal.
With God's assistance, who the hearts of kings
Illumines, I will weigh your arguments,
And choose what best my judgment shall approve.
[*To* BURLEIGH.
[Lord Burleigh's honest fears, I know it well,
Are but the offspring of his faithful care;
But yet, Lord Leicester has most truly said,
There is no need of haste; our enemy
Hath lost already her most dangerous sting —
The mighty arm of France: the fear that she
Might quickly be the victim of their zeal
Will curb the blind impatience of her friends.]

Scene IV.

Enter Sir Amias Paulet *and* Mortimer.

Eliz. There's Sir Amias Paulet; noble sir,
What tidings bring you?
Paul. Gracious sovereign,
My nephew, who but lately is return'd
From foreign travel, kneels before thy feet,
And offers thee his first and earliest homage.
Grant him thy royal grace, and let him grow
And flourish in the sunshine of thy favour.
Mort. (*kneeling on one knee*) Long live my royal mistress! Happiness
And glory form a crown to grace her brows!
Eliz. Arise, sir knight; and welcome here in England;
You've made, I hear, the tour, have been in France
And Rome, and tarried too some time at Rheims:
Tell me what plots our enemies are hatching?
Mort. May God confound them all! And may the darts
Which they shall aim against my sovereign,
Recoiling, strike their own perfidious breasts!
Eliz. Did you see Morgan, and the wily bishop
Of Ross?
Mort. I saw, my queen, all Scottish exiles
Who forge at Rheims their plots against this realm.
I stole into their confidence, in hopes
To learn some hint of their conspiracies.
Paul. Private despatches they entrusted to him,
In ciphers, for the Queen of Scots, which he,
With loyal hand, hath given up to us.
Eliz. Say, what are then their latest plans of treason?
Mort. It struck them all as 'twere a thunderbolt,

That France should leave them, and with England close
This firm alliance; now they turn their hopes
Tow'rds Spain —
ELIZ. This, Walsingham hath written us.
MORT. Besides, a bull, which from the Vatican
Pope Sixtus lately levell'd at thy throne,
Arriv'd at Rheims, as I was leaving it:
With the next ship, we may expect it here.
LEIC. England no more is frighten'd by such arms.
BUR. They're always dangerous in bigot's hands.
ELIZ. (*looking steadfastly at* MORTIMER) Your enemies have said, that you frequented
The schools at Rheims, and have abjur'd your faith.
MORT. So I pretended, that I must confess;
Such was my anxious wish to serve my queen.
ELIZ. (*to* PAULET, *who presents papers to her*) What have you there?
PAUL. 'Tis from the Queen of Scots.
'Tis a petition, and to thee addressed.
BUR. (*hastily catching at it*) Give me the paper.
PAUL. (*giving it to the* QUEEN) By your leave, my lord
High treasurer: the lady order'd me
To bring it to her Majesty's own hands.
She says I am her enemy; I am
The enemy of her offences only,
And that which is consistent with my duty
I will, and readily, oblige her in.
[*The* QUEEN *takes the letter: as she reads it,* MORTIMER *and* LEICESTER *speak some words in private.*
BUR. (*to* PAULET) What may the purport of the letter be?
Idle complaints, from which one ought to screen
The queen's too tender heart.
PAUL. What it contains,
She did not hide from me; she asks a boon;

She begs to be admitted to the grace
Of speaking with the queen.
BUR. It cannot be.
TAL. Why not? Her supplication's not unjust.
BUR. For her, the base encourager of murder;
Her, who hath thirsted for our sov'reign's blood,
The privilege to see the royal presence
Is forfeited: a faithful counsellor
Can never give this treacherous advice.
TAL. And if the queen is gracious, sir, are you
The man to hinder pity's soft emotions?
BUR. She is condemn'd to death: her head is laid
Beneath the axe, and it would ill become
The queen to see a death-devoted head.
The sentence cannot have its execution
If the queen's Majesty approaches her,
For pardon still attends the royal presence,
As sickness flies the health-dispensing hand.
ELIZ. (*having read the letter, dries her tears*) O!
what is man! What is the bliss of earth!
To what extremities is she reduc'd
Who with such proud and splendid hopes began!
Who, call'd to sit on the most ancient throne
Of Christendom, misled by vain ambition,
Hop'd with a triple crown to deck her brows!
How is her language alter'd, since the time
When she assum'd the arms of England's crown,
And by the flatt'rers of her court was styled
Sole monarch of the two Britannic isles!
Forgive me, lords, my heart is cleft in twain,
Anguish possesses me, and my soul bleeds
To think that earthly goods are so unstable,
And that the dreadful fate which rules mankind
Should threaten mine own house, and scowl so near
me.
TAL. O, queen! the God of mercy hath inform'd
Your heart; O! hearken to this heav'nly guidance.

Most grievously, indeed, hath she aton'd
Her grievous crime, and it is time that now,
At last, her heavy penance have an end.
Stretch forth your hand, to raise this abject queen,
And, like the luminous vision of an angel,
Descend into her gaol's sepulchral night.

BUR. Be steadfast, mighty queen; let no emotion
Of seeming laudable humanity
Mislead thee; take not from thyself the pow'r
Of acting as necessity commands.
Thou *canst* not pardon her, thou *canst* not save her:
Then heap not on thyself the odious blame,
That thou, with cruel and contemptuous triumph,
Didst glut thyself with gazing on thy victim.

LEIC. Let us, my lords, remain within our bounds;
The queen is wise, and doth not need our counsels,
To lead her to the most becoming choice.
This meeting of the queens hath nought in common
With the proceedings of the court of justice.
The law of England, not the monarch's will,
Condemns the Queen of Scotland, and 'twere worthy
Of the great soul of Queen Elizabeth,
To follow the soft dictates of her heart,
Though justice swerve not from its rigid path.

ELIZ. Retire, my lords. — We shall, perhaps, find means
To reconcile the tender claims of pity
With what necessity imposes on us.
And now retire. —

[*The Lords retire: she calls* SIR EDWARD MORTIMER *back.*

Sir Edward Mortimer!

Scene V.

Elizabeth, Mortimer.

Eliz. (*having measured him for some time, with her eyes, in silence*) You've shown a spirit
of advent'rous courage,
And self-possession, far beyond your years.
He who has timely learnt to play so well
The difficult dissembler's needful task
Becomes a perfect man before his time,
And shortens his probationary years.
Fate calls you to a lofty scene of action;
I prophesy it, and can, happily
For you, fulfil, myself, my own prediction.
Mort. Illustrious mistress, what I am, and all
I can accomplish, is devoted to you.
Eliz. You've made acquaintance with the foes of
England.
Their hate against me is implacable;
Their fell designs are inexhaustible.
As yet, indeed, Almighty Providence
Hath shielded me; but on my brows the crown
For ever trembles, while *she* lives who fans
Their bigot-zeal, and animates their hopes.
Mort. She lives no more, as soon as you command
it.
Eliz. O, sir! I thought I saw my labour's end,
And I am come no farther than at first.
I wish'd to let the laws of England act,
And keep my own hands pure from blood's defile-
ment.
The sentence is pronounc'd — what gain I by it?
It must be executed, Mortimer,
And I must authorise the execution.
The blame will ever light on me, I must

Avow it, nor can save appearances.
That is the worst —
MORT. But can appearances
Disturb your conscience where the cause is just?
ELIZ. You are unpractis'd in the world, sir knight;
What we appear, is subject to the judgment
Of all mankind, and what we are, of no man.
No one will be convinc'd that I am right:
I must take care that my connivance in
Her death be wrapp'd in everlasting doubt.
In deeds of such uncertain double visage
Safety lies only in obscurity.
Those measures are the worst that stand avow'd,
What's not abandon'd is not wholly lost.
MORT. (*seeking to learn her meaning*) Then it perhaps were best —
ELIZ. (*quick*) Ay, surely 'twere
The best; O, sir, my better angel speaks
Through you; — go on then, worthy sir, conclude;
You are in earnest, you examine deep,
Have quite a different spirit from your uncle.
MORT. (*surprised*) Have you imparted then your wishes to him?
ELIZ. I am sorry that I have.
MORT. Excuse his age,
The old man is grown scrupulous; such bold
Adventures ask the enterprising heart
Of youth —
ELIZ. And may I venture then on *you* —
MORT. My hand I'll lend thee; save then as thou canst
Thy reputation —
ELIZ. Yes, sir; if you could
But waken me some morning with this news —
"Maria Stuart, your bloodthirsty foe,
Breath'd yesternight her last" —
MORT. Depend on me.

ELIZ. When shall my head lie calmly down to sleep?
MORT. The next new moon will terminate thy fears.
ELIZ. And be the selfsame happy day the dawn
Of your preferment — so God speed you, sir:
And be not hurt, if, chance, my thankfulness
Should wear the mask of darkness. — Silence is
The happy suitor's god. — The closest bonds,
The dearest, are the work of secrecy. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.

MORT. (*alone*) Go, false deceitful queen! As thou deludest
The world, e'en so I cozen thee: 'tis right,
Thus to betray thee: 'tis a worthy deed.
Look I then like a murd'rer? Hast thou read
Upon my brow such base dexterity?
Trust only to *my* arm, and keep thine own
Conceal'd — assume the pious outward show
Of mercy 'fore the world, while reckoning
In secret on my murd'rous aid; and thus
By gaining time we shall ensure her rescue.
Thou wilt exalt me! — show'st me from afar
The costly recompense: but even were
Thyself the prize, and all thy woman's favour,
What art thou, poor one, and what canst thou proffer?
I scorn ambition's avaricious strife,
With *her* alone is all the charm of life,
O'er *her*, in rounds of endless glory, hover
Spirits with grace, and youth eternal bless'd,
Celestial joy is thron'd upon her breast.
Thou hast but earthly, mortal goods to offer —
That sov'reign good, for which all else be slighted.
When heart in heart, delighting and delighted;

Together flow in sweet forgetfulness; —
Ne'er didst thou woman's fairest crown possess.
Ne'er hast thou with thy hand a lover's heart requited
— I must attend Lord Leicester, and deliver
Her letter to him — 'tis a hateful charge —
I have no confidence in this court puppet —
I can effect her rescue, *I* alone;
Be danger, honour, and the prize my own.
[*As he is going,* PAULET *meets him.*

SCENE VII.

MORTIMER, PAULET.

PAUL. What said the queen to you? —
MORT. 'Twas nothing, sir;
Nothing of consequence —
PAUL. (*looking at him earnestly*) Hear, Mortimer!
It is a false and slipp'ry ground on which
You tread. The grace of princes is alluring,
Youth loves ambition — let not yours betray you.
MORT. Was it not yourself that brought me to the court?
PAUL. O, would to God I had not done as much!
The honour of our house was never reap'd
In courts — stand fast, my nephew — purchase not
Too dear, nor stain your conscience with a crime.
MORT. What are these fears? What are you dreaming of?
PAUL. How high soe'er the queen may pledge herself
To raise you, trust not her alluring words.
[The spirit of the world's a lying spirit,
And vice is a deceitful, treach'rous friend.]
She will deny you, if you listen to her;
And, to preserve her own good name, will punish

The bloody deed, which she herself enjoin'd.
MORT. The bloody deed! —
PAUL. Away, dissimulation! —
I know the deed the queen propos'd to you.
She hopes that your ambitious youth will prove
More docile than my rigid age. But say,
Have you then pledg'd your promise, have you? —
MORT. Uncle!
PAUL. If you have done so, I abandon you,
And lay my curse upon you —
LEIC. (*entering*) Worthy sir!
I with your nephew wish a word. The queen
Is graciously inclin'd to him; she wills
That to his custody the Scottish queen
Be with full powers entrusted. She relies
On his fidelity.
PAUL. Relies! — 'tis well —
LEIC. What say you, sir?
PAUL. Her Majesty relies
On him; and I, my noble lord, rely
Upon myself, and my two open eyes. [*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.

LEICESTER, MORTIMER.

LEIC. (*surprised*) What ailed the knight?
MORT. My lord, I cannot tell
What angers him: — the confidence, perhaps,
The queen so suddenly confers on me.
LEIC. Are you deserving then of confidence?
MORT. This would I ask of you, my Lord of Leicester.
LEIC. You said you wish'd to speak with me in private.
MORT. Assure me first that I may safely venture.

LEIC. Who gives me an assurance on your side?
Let not my want of confidence offend you;
I see you, sir, exhibit at this court
Two diff'rent aspects; one of them *must* be
A borrow'd one; but which of them is real?
MORT. The selfsame doubts I have concerning you.
LEIC. Which, then, shall pave the way to confidence?
MORT. He who, by doing it, is least in danger.
LEIC. Well, that are you —
MORT. No, you; — the evidence
Of such a weighty, powerful peer as you
Can overwhelm my voice. My accusation
Is weak against your rank and influence.
LEIC. Sir, you mistake. In ev'rything but this
I'm pow'rful here; but in this tender point,
Which I am call'd upon to trust you with,
I am the weakest man of all the court,
The poorest testimony can undo me.
MORT. If the all-pow'rful Earl of Leicester deign
To stoop so low to meet me, and to make
Such a confession to me, I may venture
To think a little better of myself,
And lead the way in magnanimity.
LEIC. Lead you the way of confidence, I'll follow.
MORT. (*producing suddenly the letter*) Here is a letter from the Queen of Scotland.
LEIC. (*alarmed, catches hastily at the letter*) Speak softly, sir! — what see I? — Oh, it is
Her picture! —
[*Kisses and examines it with speechless joy — a pause.*
MORT. (*who has watched him closely the whole time*) Now, my lord, I can believe you.
LEIC. (*having hastily run through the letter*) You know the purport of this letter, sir?
MORT. Not I. —
LEIC. Indeed! She surely hath informed you. —

MORT. Nothing hath she informed me of. She said
You would explain this riddle to me — 'tis
To me a riddle, that the Earl of Leicester,
The far-famed fav'rite of Elizabeth,
The open, bitter enemy of Mary,
And one of those who spoke her mortal sentence,
Should be the man from whom the queen expects
Deliv'rance from her woes; and yet it must be;
Your eyes express too plainly, what your heart
Feels for the hapless lady. —
LEIC. Tell me, sir,
First, how it comes that you should take so warm
An int'rest in her fate; and what it was
Gain'd you her confidence? —
MORT. My lord, I can,
And in few words, explain this mystery.
I lately have at Rome abjur'd my creed,
And stand in correspondence with the Guises.
A letter from the cardinal-archbishop
Was my credential with the Queen of Scots.
LEIC. I am acquainted, sir, with your conversion;
'Twas that which wak'd my confidence towards you.
[Each remnant of distrust be henceforth banish'd;]
Your hand, sir, pardon me these idle doubts.
I cannot use too much precaution here,
Knowing how Walsingham and Burleigh hate me,
And, watching me, in secret spread their snares;
You might have been their instrument, their creature
To lure me to their toils.
MORT. How poor a part
So great a nobleman is forc'd to play
At court! My lord, I pity you!
LEIC. With joy
I rest upon the faithful breast of friendship,
Where I can ease me of this long constraint.
You seem surpris'd, sir, that my heart is turn'd

So suddenly towards the captive queen.
In truth, I never hated her; — the times
Have forc'd me to appear her enemy.
She was, as you well know, my destined bride,
Long since, ere she bestow'd her hand on Darnley,
While yet the beams of glory round her smil'd.
Coldly I *then* refused the proffered boon.
Now in confinement, at the gates of death,
I claim her, at the hazard of my life.

MORT. True magnanimity, my lord —

LEIC. The state
Of circumstances, since that time, is chang'd.
Ambition made me all insensible
To youth and beauty. — Mary's hand I held
Too insignificant for me — I hoped
To be the husband of the Queen of England.

MORT. It is well known she gave you preference
Before all others.

LEIC. So, indeed, it seem'd.
Now, after ten lost years of tedious courtship,
And hateful self-constraint — O, sir, my heart
Must ease itself of this long agony.
They call me happy! — Did they only know
What the chains are, for which they envy me!
When I had sacrificed ten bitter years
To the proud idol of her vanity;
Submitted with a slave's humility
To ev'ry change of her despotic fancies;
The plaything of each little wayward whim.
At times by seeming tenderness caressed,
As oft repulsed with proud and cold disdain;
Alike tormented by her grace and rigour:
Watch'd like a pris'ner by the Argus-eyes
Of jealousy; examin'd like a schoolboy,
And rail'd at like a servant. — O, no tongue
Can paint this hell —

MORT. My lord, I feel for you.

LEIC. To lose, and at the very goal, the prize!
Another comes to rob me of the fruits
Of my so anxious wooing. I must lose
To her young blooming husband all those rights
Of which I was so long in full possession;
And I must from the stage descend, where I
So long have play'd the most distinguish'd part.
'Tis not her hand alone this envious stranger
Threatens, he'd rob me of her favour too;
She is a woman, and he form'd to please.
MORT. He is the son of Cath'rine. He has learnt,
In a good school, the arts of flattery.
LEIC. Thus fall my hopes; — I strove to seize a plank
To bear me in this shipwreck of my fortunes,
And my eye turn'd itself towards the hope
Of former days once more; then Mary's image
Within me was renew'd, and youth and beauty
Once more asserted all their former rights.
No more 'twas cold ambition; 'twas my heart
Which now compar'd, and with regret I felt
The value of the jewel I had lost.
With horror I beheld her in the depths
Of misery, cast down by my transgression;
Then wak'd the hope in me, that I might still
Deliver and possess her; I contriv'd
To send her, through a faithful hand, the news
Of my conversion to her interests;
And in this letter which you brought me, she
Assures me that she pardons me, and offers
Herself as guerdon, if I rescue her.
MORT. But you attempted nothing for her rescue.
You let her be condemn'd without a word;
You gave, yourself, your verdict for her death;
A miracle must happen, and the light
Of truth must move me, *me*, her keeper's nephew,
And Heav'n must, in the Vatican at Rome,

Prepare for her an unexpected succour,
Else had she never found the way to you.
LEIC. O, sir! it has tormented me enough!
About this time it was, that they remov'd her
From Talbot's castle, and deliver'd her
Up to your uncle's stricter custody.
Each way to her was shut. I was oblig'd,
Before the world, to persecute her still;
But do not think that I would patiently
Have seen her led to death. No, sir; I hop'd,
And still I hope, to ward off all extremes,
Till I can find some certain means to save her.
MORT. These are already found: my Lord of Leicester,
Your gen'rous confidence in me deserves
A like return. *I* will deliver her.
That is my object here — my dispositions
Are made already, and your pow'rful aid,
Assures us of success in our attempt.
LEIC. What say you? — you alarm me — how? — you would —
MORT. I'll open forcibly her prison gates: —
I have confederates, and all is ready.
LEIC. You have confederates, accomplices?
Alas! In what rash enterprise would you
Engage me? And these friends, know they *my* secret?
MORT. Fear not; our plan was laid without your help,
Without your help it would have been accomplish'd,
Had she not signified her resolution
To owe her liberty to you alone.
LEIC. And can you then, with certainty, assure me,
That in your plot my name has not been mention'd?
MORT. You may depend upon it. How, my lord,
So scrupulous when help is offer'd you?
You wish to rescue Mary, and possess her;
You find confed'rates; sudden, unexpected,

The readiest means fall, as it were from Heav'n,
Yet you show more perplexity than joy.
LEIC. We must avoid all violence; it is
Too dangerous an enterprise.
MORT. Delay
Is also dangerous.
LEIC. I tell you, sir,
'Tis not to be attempted —
MORT. My lord,
Too hazardous for *you* who would possess her;
But *we*, who only wish to rescue her,
We are more bold.
LEIC. Young man, you are too hasty
In such a thorny, dangerous attempt.
MORT. And you too scrupulous in honour's cause.
LEIC. I see the trammels that are spread around us.
MORT. And I feel courage to break through them all.
LEIC. Fool-hardiness and madness, is this courage?
MORT. This prudence is not bravery, my lord.
LEIC. You surely wish to end like Babington.
MORT. You not to imitate great Norfolk's virtue.
LEIC. Norfolk ne'er won the bride he woo'd so fondly.
MORT. But yet he prov'd how truly he deserved her.
LEIC. If *we* are ruin'd, she must fall with us.
MORT. If *we* risk nothing, she will ne'er be rescued.
LEIC. You will not weigh the matter, will not hear;
With blind and hasty rashness you destroy
The plans which I so happily had framed.
MORT. And what were then the plans which *you* had fram'd?
What have *you* done then to deliver her?
And how, if I were miscreant enough
To murder her, as was propos'd to me
This moment by Elizabeth, and which
She looks upon as certain; only name

The measures *you* have taken to protect her?
LEIC. Did the queen give you then this bloody order?
MORT. She was deceiv'd in me, as Mary is
In you.
LEIC. And have you promis'd it; say, have you?
MORT. That she might not engage another's hand,
I offer'd mine.
LEIC. Well done, sir, — that was right; —
This gives us leisure, for she rests secure
Upon your bloody service, and the sentence
Is unfulfill'd the while, and we gain time.
MORT. (*angrily*) No, we are losing time.
LEIC. The queen depends
On you, and will the readier make a show
Of mercy — and I may prevail on her
To give an audience to her adversary;
And by this stratagem we tie her hands;
Yes! I will make the attempt, strain ev'ry nerve.
MORT. And what is gain'd by this? When she discover
That I am cheating her, that Mary lives,
Are we not where we were? She never will
Be free; the mildest doom which can await her,
At best, is but perpetual confinement.
A daring deed must one day end the matter;
Why will you not with such a deed begin?
The pow'r is in your hands, would you but rouse
The might of your dependents round about
Your many castles, 'twere an host; and still
Has Mary many secret friends. The Howards'
And Percies' noble houses, though their chiefs
Be fall'n, are rich in heroes; they but wait
For the example of some potent lord.
Away with feigning — act an open part,
And, like a loyal knight, protect your fair;
Fight a good fight for her! You know you are

Lord of the person of the Queen of England,
Whene'er you will: invite her to your castle,
Oft hath she thither follow'd you — then show
That you're a man — then speak as master — keep her
Confin'd till she release the Queen of Scots.

LEIC. I am astonish'd — I am terrified! —
Where would your giddy madness hurry you?
Are you acquainted with this country? Know you
The deeps and shallows of this court? With what
A potent spell this female sceptre binds
And rules men's spirits round her? 'Tis in vain
You seek th' heroic energy which once
Was active in this land! — it is subdued, —
A woman holds it under lock and key,
And ev'ry spring of courage is relax'd.
Follow my counsel — venture nothing rashly.
Some one approaches — go —

MORT. And Mary hopes —
Shall I return to her with empty comfort?

LEIC. Bear her my vows of everlasting love.

MORT. Bear them yourself! I offer'd my assistance
As her deliv'rer, not your messenger. [*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER.

ELIZ. Say who was here? I heard the sound of voices.

LEIC. (*turning quickly and perplexed around, on hearing the* QUEEN) It was young Mortimer —

ELIZ. How now, my lord:
Why so confus'd?

LEIC. (*collecting himself*) Your presence is the cause.
Ne'er did I see thy beauty so resplendent.

My sight is dazzled by thy heavenly charms.
Oh! —
ELIZ. Whence this sigh?
LEIC. Have I no reason, then,
To sigh? When I behold you in your glory,
I feel anew, with pain unspeakable,
The loss which threatens me.
ELIZ. What loss, my lord?
LEIC. Your heart — your own inestimable self:
Soon will you feel yourself within the arms
Of your young ardent husband, highly bless'd.
He will possess your heart, without a rival.
He is of royal blood — that am not *I*.
Yet, spite of all the world can say, there lives not
One on this globe, who with such fervent zeal
Adores you, as the man who loses you.
Anjou hath never seen you, can but love
Your glory, and the splendour of your reign; —
But I love *you* — and were you born, of all
The peasant maids the poorest, I the first
Of kings, I would descend to your condition,
And lay my crown and sceptre at your feet!
ELIZ. Oh pity me, my Dudley; do not blame me —
I cannot ask my heart. Oh, *that* had chosen
Far otherwise! Ah, how I envy others
Who can exalt the object of their love!
But I am not so blest: — 'tis not my fortune
To place upon the brows of him, the dearest
Of men to me, the royal crown of England.
The Queen of Scotland was allow'd to make
Her hand the token of her inclination; —
She hath had ev'ry freedom, and hath drunk,
E'en to the very dregs, the cup of joy.
LEIC. And now she drinks the bitter cup of sorrow.
ELIZ. She never did respect the world's opinion; —
Life was to her a sport; — she never courted
The yoke to which I bow'd my willing neck.

And yet, methinks, I had as just a claim
As she, to please myself, and taste the joys
Of life: — but I preferr'd the rigid duties
Which royalty imposed on me; — yet *she* —
She was the favourite of all the men,
Because she only strove to be a woman;
And youth and age became alike her suitors.
Thus are the men — voluptuaries all!
The willing slaves of levity and pleasure;
Value that least which claims their reverence.
And did not even Talbot, though grayheaded,
Grow young again, when speaking of her charms?

LEIC. Forgive him — for he was her keeper once,
And she has fool'd him with her cunning wiles.

ELIZ. And is it really true, that she's so fair?
So often have I been oblig'd to hear
The praises of this wonder — it were well
If I could learn on what I might depend:
Pictures are flattering, and description lies; —
I will trust nothing but my own conviction.
Why gaze you at me thus?

LEIC. I plac'd in thought
You and Maria Stuart, side by side.
Yes! I confess, I oft have felt a wish,
If it could be but secretly contriv'd,
To see you placed beside the Scottish queen.
Then would you feel, and not till then, the full
Enjoyment of your triumph: — she deserves
To be thus humbled; she deserves to see,
With her own eyes, and envy's glance is keen,
Herself surpass'd, to feel herself o'ermatch'd,
As much by thee in form and princely grace,
As in each virtue that adorns the sex.

ELIZ. In years she has th' advantage —

LEIC. Has she so?
I never should have thought it. But her griefs,
Her sufferings, indeed! 'tis possible,

Have brought down age upon her ere her time.
Yes, and 'twould mortify her to see thee
As bride — *she* hath already turn'd her back
On each fair hope of life, and she would see thee
Advancing tow'rd the open arms of joy —
See thee as bride of France's royal son,
She who hath always plumed herself so high
On her connection with the House of France,
And still depends upon its mighty aid.

ELIZ. (*with a careless air*) I'm teaz'd to grant this interview.

LEIC. She asks it
As a favour; grant it as a punishment.
For though you should conduct her to the block,
Yet would it less torment her, than to see
Herself extinguish'd by your beauty's splendour.
Thus can you murder her, as she hath wish'd
To murder you. When she beholds your beauty,
Guarded by modesty, and beaming bright,
In the clear glory of unspotted fame,
(Which *she* with thoughtless levity discarded),
Exalted by the splendour of the crown,
And blooming now with tender bridal graces —
Then is the hour of her destruction come.
Yes — when I now behold you — you were never,
No, never were you so prepar'd to seal
The triumph of your beauty. As but now
You enter'd the apartment, I was dazzled
As by a glorious vision from on high.
Could you but now, now as you are, appear
Before her, you could find no better moment.

ELIZ. Now? — no — not now — no, Leicester — this must be
Maturely weigh'd — I must with Burleigh —

LEIC. Burleigh!
To him you are but sov'reign, and as such
Alone he seeks your welfare; but your rights,

Deriv'd from womanhood, this tender point
Must be decided by your own tribunal,
Not by the statesman: — yet e'en policy
Demands that you should see her, and allure,
By such a gen'rous deed, the public voice.
You can hereafter act as it may please you,
To rid you of the hateful enemy.

ELIZ. But would it then become me to behold
My kinswoman in infamy and want?
They say she is not royally attended;
Would not the sight of her distress reproach me?

LEIC. You need not cross her threshold — hear my counsel: —
A fortunate conjuncture favours it.
The hunt you mean to honour with your presence
Is in the neighbourhood of Fotheringay;
Permission may be giv'n to Lady Stuart
To take the air; you meet her in the park,
As if by accident; it must not seem
To have been plann'd, and should you not incline,
You need not speak to her.

ELIZ. If I am foolish,
Be yours the fault, not mine. I would not care
To-day to cross your wishes; for to-day
I've grieved you more than all my other subjects.
[*Tenderly.*
Let it then be your fancy. Leicester, hence
You see the free obsequiousness of love,
Which suffers that which it cannot approve.

[LEICESTER *prostrates himself before her, and the curtain falls.*

ACT III.

Scene I.

In a Park. — In the foreground Trees; in the background a distant Prospect.

Mary *advances, running from behind the Trees.* Hannah Kennedy *follows slowly.*

Ken. You hasten on as if endow'd with wings —
I cannot follow you so swiftly — wait.
Mary. Freedom returns! O let me enjoy it, —
Let me be childish, — be thou childish with me!
Freedom invites me! O let me employ it, —
Skimming with winged step light o'er the lea;
Have I escaped from this mansion of mourning?
Holds me no more the sad dungeon of care?
Let me, with joy and with eagerness burning,
Drink in the free, the celestial air!
Ken. O, my dear lady! but a very little
Is your sad goal extended; you behold not
The wall that shuts us in: these plaited tufts
Of trees hide from your sight the hated object.
Mary. Thanks to these friendly trees, that hide from me
My prison walls, and flatter my illusion!
Happy I now may dream myself, and free;
Why wake me from my dream's so sweet confusion?
The extended vault of heaven around me lies.
Free and unfetter'd range my wandering eyes
O'er space's vast immeasurable sea!
From where yon misty mountains rise on high,
I can my empire's boundaries explore;
And those light clouds which, steering southwards, fly,
Seek the mild clime of France's genial shore.

Fast fleeting clouds! ye meteors that fly;
Could I but with you sail through the sky!
Tenderly greet the dear land of my youth!
Here I am captive! oppress'd by my foes,
No other than you may carry my woes,
Free thro' the ether your pathway is seen,
Ye own not the power of this tyrant queen.

KEN. Alas! dear lady! You're beside yourself,
This long-lost, long-sought freedom makes you rave.

MARY. Yonder's a fisher returning to home;—
Poor though it be, would he lend me his wherry,
Quick to congenial shores would I ferry.
Spare is his trade, and labour's his doom—
Rich would I freight his vessel with treasure,
Such a draught should be his as he never had seen,
Wealth should he find in his nets without measure,
Would he but rescue a poor captive queen.

KEN. Fond, fruitless wishes! See you not from far,
How we are follow'd by observing spies?
A dismal, barb'rous prohibition scares
Each sympathetic being from our path.

MARY. No, gentle Hannah! Trust me, not in vain
My prison gates are open'd. This small grace
Is harbinger of greater happiness.
No! I mistake not—'tis the active hand
Of love to which I owe this kind indulgence.
I recognise in this the mighty arm
Of Leicester. They will by degrees expand
My prison; will accustom me, through small,
To greater liberty, until at last
I shall behold the face of him whose hand
Will dash my fetters off, and that for ever.

KEN. O, my dear queen! I cannot reconcile
These contradictions. 'Twas but yesterday
That they announc'd your death, and all at once,
To-day, you have such liberty. Their chains
Are also loos'd, as I have oft been told,

Whom everlasting liberty awaits.
[*Hunting horns at a distance.*
MARY. Hear'st thou the bugle, so blithely resounding?
Hear'st thou its echoes through wood and through plain?
Oh, might I now, on my nimble steed bounding,
Join with the jocund, the frolicsome train!
[*Hunting horns again heard.*
Again! O this sad and this pleasing remembrance!
These are the sounds, which, so sprightly and clear,
Oft, when with music the hounds and the horn,
So cheerfully welcom'd the break of the morn,
On the heaths of the Highlands delighted my ear.

SCENE II.

Enter PAULET.

PAUL. Well! have I acted right at last, my lady?
Do I for once, at least, deserve your thanks?
MARY. How! Do I owe this favour, sir, to you?
PAUL. Why not to me? I visited the court,
And gave the queen your letter.
MARY. Did you give it?
In very truth did you deliver it?
And is this freedom which I now enjoy
The happy consequence?
PAUL. (*significantly*) Nor that alone;
Prepare yourself to see a greater still.
MARY. A greater still! What do you mean by that?
PAUL. You heard the bugle-horns?
MARY. (*starting back with foreboding apprehension*) You frighten me —

PAUL. The queen is hunting in the neighbourhood —
MARY. What!
PAUL. In a few moments she'll appear before you.
KEN. (*hastening toward* MARY, *and about to fall*)
How fare you, dearest lady? — you grow pale.
PAUL. How? Is't not well? Was it not then your pray'r?
'Tis granted now, before it was expected;
You who had ever such a ready speech,
Now summon all your powers of eloquence,
The important time to use them now is come.
MARY. O, why was I not told of this before?
Now I am not prepar'd for it — not now —
What, as the greatest favour, I besought,
Seems to me now most fearful: — Hannah, come,
Lead me into the house, till I collect
My spirits.
PAUL. Stay; — you must await her here.
Yes! — I believe you may be well alarm'd
To stand before your judge.

SCENE III.

Enter the EARL OF SHREWSBURY.

MARY. 'Tis not for that,
O God! Far other thoughts possess me now.
O, worthy Shrewsbury! You come as though
You were an angel sent to me from Heav'n.
I cannot, will not see her. Save me, save me
From the detested sight!
SHREW. Your Majesty,
Command yourself, and summon all your courage,
'Tis the decisive moment of your fate.
MARY. For years I've waited, and prepared myself.

For this I've studied, weigh'd, and written down
Each word within the tablet of my mem'ry,
That was to touch, and move her to compassion.
Forgotten suddenly, effac'd is all,
And nothing lives within me at this moment,
But the fierce, burning feeling of my wrongs.
My heart is turn'd to direst hate against her;
All gentle thoughts, all sweet forgiving words,
Are gone, and round me stand, with grisly mien,
The fiends of hell, and shake their snaky locks!

SHREW. Command your wild, rebellious blood;—constrain
The bitterness which fills your heart. No good
Ensues, when hatred is oppos'd to hate.
How much soe'er the inward struggle cost,
You must submit to stern necessity.
The pow'r is in her hand, be therefore humble.

MARY. To her? I never can.

SHREW. But pray, submit.
Speak with respect, with calmness! Strive to move
Her magnanimity; insist not, now,
Upon your rights, not now — 'tis not the season.

MARY. Ah! woe is me! I've pray'd for my destruction,
And, as a curse to me, my prayer is heard.
We never should have seen each other — never! —
O, this can never, never come to good.
Rather in love could fire and water meet,
The timid lamb embrace the roaring tiger! —
I have been hurt too grievously; she hath
Too grievously oppress'd me; no atonement
Can make us friends!

SHREW. First see her, face to face:
Did I not see how she was mov'd at reading
Your letter? How her eyes were drown'd in tears?
No — she is not unfeeling; only place
More confidence in her. It was for this

That I came on before her, to entreat you
To be collected — to admonish you —

MARY. (*seizing his hand*) Oh, Talbot! you have ever been my friend,
Had I but stay'd beneath your kindly care!
They have, indeed, misused me, Shrewsbury.

SHREW. Let all be now forgot, and only think
How to receive her with submissiveness.

MARY. Is Burleigh with her too, my evil genius?

SHREW. No one attends her but the Earl of Leicester.

MARY. Lord Leicester?

SHREW. Fear not him; it is not he
Who wishes your destruction; — 'twas his work,
That here the queen hath granted you this meeting.

MARY. Ah! well I knew it.

SHREW. What?

PAUL. The queen approaches.

[*They all draw aside;* MARY *alone remains, leaning on* KENNEDY.

SCENE IV.

The same, ELIZABETH, EARL OF LEICESTER, *and Retinue.*

ELIZ. (*to* LEICESTER) What seat is that, my lord?

LEIC. 'Tis Fotheringay.

ELIZ. (*to* SHREWSBURY) My lord, send back our retinue to London;
The people crowd too eager in the roads,
We'll seek a refuge in this quiet park.

[TALBOT *sends the train away. She looks steadfastly at* MARY, *as she speaks further with* PAULET.

My honest people love me overmuch.
These signs of joy are quite idolatrous.

Thus should a god be honour'd, not a mortal.

MARY. (*who the whole time had leaned, almost fainting, on* KENNEDY, *rises now, and her eyes meet the steady piercing look of* ELIZABETH; *she shudders and throws herself again upon* KENNEDY'S *bosom*)

O God! from out these features speaks no heart.

ELIZ. What lady's that? —

[*A general embarrassed silence.*

LEIC. You are at Fotheringay,

My liege.

ELIZ. (*as if surprised, casting an angry look at* LEICESTER)

Who hath done this, my Lord of Leicester?

LEIC. 'Tis past my queen; — and now that Heav'n hath led

Your footsteps hither, be magnanimous;

And let sweet pity be triumphant now.

SHREW. O royal mistress! yield to our entreaties;

O cast your eyes on this unhappy one,

Who stands dissolved in anguish.

[MARY *collects herself, and begins to advance toward* ELIZABETH, *stops shuddering at half way; her action expresses the most violent internal struggle.*

ELIZ. How, my lords!

Which of you then announc'd to me a prisoner

Bow'd down by woe? I see a haughty one,

By no means humbled by calamity.

MARY. Well, be it so: — to this will I submit.

Farewell high thought, and pride of noble mind!

I will forget my dignity, and all

My sufferings; I will fall before *her* feet

Who hath reduced me to this wretchedness.

[*She turns toward the* QUEEN.

The voice of Heav'n decides for you, my sister.

Your happy brows are now with triumph crown'd,

I bless the Power Divine, which thus hath rais'd you.
[*She kneels.*
But in your turn be merciful, my sister;
Let me not lie before you thus disgraced;
Stretch forth your hand, your royal hand, to raise
Your sister from the depths of her distress.

ELIZ. (*stepping back*) You are where it becomes you, Lady Stuart;
And thankfully I prize my God's protection,
Who hath not suffer'd me to kneel a suppliant
Thus at your feet, as you now kneel at mine.

MARY. (*with increasing energy of feeling*) Think on all earthly things, vicissitudes.
Oh! there are gods who punish haughty pride;
Respect them, honour them, the dreadful ones
Who thus before thy feet have humbled me!
Before these strangers' eyes, dishonour not
Yourself in me: profane not, nor disgrace
The royal blood of Tudor. In my veins
It flows as pure a stream as in your own.
O! for God's pity, stand not so estranged
And inaccessible, like some tall cliff,
Which the poor shipwreck'd mariner in vain
Struggles to seize, and labours to embrace.
My all, my life, my fortune now depends
Upon the influence of my words and tears;
That I may touch your heart, O! set mine free.
If you regard me with those icy looks,
My shudd'ring heart contracts itself, the stream
Of tears is dried, and frigid horror chains
The words of supplication in my bosom!

ELIZ. (*cold and severe*) What would you say to me, my Lady Stuart?
You wish'd to speak with me; and I forgetting
The queen, and all the wrongs I have sustain'd,
Fulfil the pious duty of the sister,
And grant the boon you wished for of my presence.

Yet I, in yielding to the gen'rous feelings
Of magnanimity, expose myself
To rightful censure, that I stoop so low.
For well you know, you would have had me murder'd.
MARY. O! how shall I begin? O, how shall I
So artfully arrange my cautious words,
That they may touch, yet not offend your heart? —
Strengthen my words, O Heav'n! and take from them
Whate'er might wound. Alas! I cannot speak
In my own cause, without impeaching you,
And that most heavily, I wish not so;
You have not, as you ought, behav'd to me;
I am a queen, like you, yet you have held me
Confin'd in prison. As a suppliant
I came to you, yet *you* in me insulted
The pious use of hospitality;
Slighting in me the holy law of nations,
Immur'd me in a dungeon — tore from me
My friends and servants; to unseemly want
I was exposed, and hurried to the bar
Of a disgraceful, insolent tribunal.
No more of this; — in everlasting silence
Be buried all the cruelties I suffer'd!
See — I will throw the blame of all on fate,
'Twas not your fault, no more than it was mine.
An evil spirit rose from the abyss,
To kindle in our hearts the flames of hate,
By which our tender youth had been divided.
It grew with us, and bad designing men
Fann'd with their ready breath the fatal fire:
Frantics, enthusiasts, with sword and dagger
Arm'd the uncall'd-for hand! This is the curse
Of kings, that they, divided, tear the world
In pieces with their hatred, and let loose
The raging furies of all hellish strife!
No foreign tongue is now between us, sister,

[*Approaching her confidently, and with a flattering tone.*

Now stand we face to face; now, sister, speak;
Name but my crime, I'll fully satisfy you, —
Alas! had you vouchsaf'd to hear me then,
When I so earnest sought to meet your eye,
It never would have come to this, nor would,
Here in this mournful place, have happen'd now
This so distressful, this so mournful meeting.

ELIZ. My better stars preserv'd me. I was warn'd,
And laid not to my breast the pois'nous adder!
Accuse not fate! your own deceitful heart
It was, the wild ambition of your house:
As yet no enmities had pass'd between us,
When your imperious uncle, the proud priest,
Whose shameless hand grasps at all crowns, attack'd me
With unprovok'd hostility, and taught
You, but too docile, to assume my arms,
To vest yourself with my imperial title,
And meet me in the lists in mortal strife:
What arms employ'd he not to storm my throne?
The curses of the priests, the people's sword,
The dreadful weapons of religious frenzy; —
Ev'n here in my own kingdom's peaceful haunts,
He fann'd the flames of civil insurrection; —
But God is with me, and the haughty priest
Has not maintain'd the field. The blow was aim'd
Full at my head, but yours it is which falls!

MARY. I'm in the hand of Heav'n. You never will
Exert so cruelly the pow'r it gives you.

ELIZ. Who shall prevent me? Say, did not your uncle
Set all the kings of Europe the example
How to conclude a peace with those they hate.
Be mine the school of Saint Bartholomew;
What's kindred then to me, or nations' laws?
The Church can break the bands of ev'ry duty;

It consecrates the regicide, the traitor;
I only practise what your priests have taught!
Say then, what surety can be offer'd me,
Should I magnanimously loose your bonds?
Say, with what lock can I secure your faith,
Which by St. Peter's keys cannot be open'd?
Force is my only surety; no alliance
Can be concluded with a race of vipers.

MARY. O! this is but your wretched, dark suspicion!
For you have constantly regarded me
But as a stranger, and an enemy.
Had you declar'd me heir to your dominions,
As is my right, then gratitude and love
In me had fix'd, for you, a faithful friend
And kinswoman.

ELIZ. Your friendship is abroad,
Your house is papacy, the monk your brother.
Name *you* my successor! The treach'rous snare!
That in my life you might seduce my people;
And, like a sly Armida, in your net
Entangle all our noble English youth:
That all might turn to the new rising sun,
And I —

MARY. O sister, rule your realm in peace:
I give up ev'ry claim to these domains —
Alas! the pinions of my soul are lam'd;
Greatness entices me no more: your point
Is gain'd; I am but Mary's shadow now —
My noble spirit is at last broke down
By long captivity: — you've done your worst
On me; you have destroy'd me in my bloom!
Now, end your work, my sister; — speak at length
The word, which to pronounce has brought you hither;
For I will ne'er believe, that you are come,
To mock unfeelingly your hapless victim.
Pronounce this word; — say, "Mary, you are free:

You have already felt my pow'r, — learn now
To honour too my generosity."
Say this, and I will take my life, will take
My freedom, as a present from your hands.
One word makes all undone; — I wait for it; —
O let it not be needlessly delay'd.
Woe to you, if you end not with this word!
For should you not, like some divinity,
Dispensing noble blessings, quit me now,
Then, sister, not for all this island's wealth,
For all the realms encircled by the deep,
Would I exchange my present lot for yours.

ELIZ. And you confess at last, that you are conquer'd:
Are all your schemes run out? No more assassins
Now on the road? Will no adventurer
Attempt again, for you, the sad achievement?
Yes, madam, it is over: — You'll seduce
No mortal more. The world has other cares;
None is ambitious of the dang'rous honour
Of being your fourth husband: — You destroy
Your wooers like your husbands.

MARY. (*starting angrily*) Sister, sister! —
Grant me forbearance, all ye pow'rs of heav'n!

ELIZ. (*regards her long, with a look of proud contempt*) Those then, my Lord of Leicester, are the charms
Which no man with impunity can view,
Near which no woman dare attempt to stand?
In sooth, this honour has been cheaply gain'd;
She who to all is common, may with ease
Become the common object of applause.

MARY. This is too much!

ELIZ. (*laughing insultingly*) You show us now indeed,
Your real face; till now 'twas but the mask.

MARY. (*burning with rage, yet dignified and noble*)

My sins were human, and the faults of youth:
Superior force misled me. I have never
Denied or sought to hide it: I despis'd
All false appearance as became a queen.
The worst of me is known, and I can say,
That I am better than the fame I bear.
Woe to you! when, in time to come, the world
Shall draw the robe of honour from your deeds,
With which thy arch-hypocrisy has veil'd
The raging flames of lawless secret lust.
Virtue was not your portion from your mother;
Well know we what it was which brought the head
Of Anna Boleyn to the fatal block.

SHREW. (*stepping between both* QUEENS) O! Heav'n!
Alas, and must it come to this!
Is this the moderation, the submission,
My lady? —

MARY. Moderation! I've supported
What human nature can support: farewell,
Lamb-hearted resignation, passive patience,
Fly to thy native heaven; burst at length
Thy bonds, come forward from thy dreary cave,
In all thy fury, long-suppressed rancour!
And thou, who to the anger'd basilisk
Impart'st the murd'rous glance, O, arm my tongue
With poison'd darts!

SHREW. She is beside herself!
Exasperated, mad! My liege, forgive her.

[ELIZABETH, *speechless with anger, casts enraged looks at* MARY.

LEIC. (*in the most violent agitation; he seeks to lead* ELIZABETH *away*)
Attend not to her rage! Away, away,
From this disastrous place!

MARY. (*raising her voice*) A bastard soils,
Profanes the English throne! The gen'rous Britons
Are cheated by a juggler, [whose whole figure

Is false and painted, heart as well as face!]
If right prevail'd, you now would in the dust
Before me lie, for I'm your rightful monarch!

[ELIZABETH *hastily quits the stage; the lords follow her in the greatest consternation.*

SCENE V.

MARY, KENNEDY.

KEN. What have you done? She has gone hence in wrath,
All hope is over now!

MARY. (*still quite beside herself*) Gone hence in wrath!
She carries death within her heart! I know it.
[*Falling on* KENNEDY'S *bosom.*
Now I am happy, Hannah! and, at last,
After whole years of sorrow and abasement,
One moment of victorious revenge!
A weight falls off my heart, a weight of mountains;
I plung'd the steel in my oppressor's breast!

KEN. Unhappy lady! Frenzy overcomes you.
Yes, you have wounded your invet'rate foe;
'Tis she who wields the light'ning, she is queen,
You have insulted her before her minion.

MARY. I have abas'd her before Leicester's eyes;
He saw it, he was witness of my triumph.
How did I hurl her from her haughty height,
He saw it, and his presence strengthen'd me.

Scene VI.

Enter Mortimer.

Ken. O sir! What an occurrence!
Mort. I heard all —
[*Gives the nurse a sign to repair to her post, and draws nearer; his whole appearance expresses the utmost violence of passion.*
Thine is the palm; — thou trod'st her to the dust! —
Thou wast the queen, she was the malefactor; —
I am transported with thy noble courage; —
Yes! I adore thee; like a Deity,
My sense is dazzled by thy heav'nly beams.
Mary. (*with vivacity and expectation*) You spoke with Leicester, gave my letter to him. —
My present too? — O speak, sir.
Mort. (*beholding her with glowing looks*) How thy noble,
Thy royal indignation shone, and cast
A glory round thy beauty; yes, by heavens,
Thou art the fairest woman upon earth!
Mary. Sir, satisfy, I beg you, my impatience;
What says his lordship? Say, sir, may I hope?
Mort. Who? — he? — he is a wretch, a very coward,
Hope nought from him; despise him, and forget him!
Mary. What say you?
Mort. He deliver, and possess you!
Why let him dare it: — he! — he must with me
In mortal contest first deserve the prize!
Mary. You gave him not my letter? Then, indeed,
My hopes are lost!
Mort. The coward loves his life.
Whoe'er would rescue you, and call you his,

Must boldly dare affront e'en death itself!
MARY. Will he do nothing for me?
MORT. Speak not of him.
What can he do? What need have we of him?
I will release you; I alone.
MARY. Alas!
What pow'r have you?
MORT. Deceive yourself no more;
Think not your case is now as formerly;
The moment that the queen thus quitted you,
And that your interview had ta'en this turn,
All hope was lost, each way of mercy shut.
Now deeds must speak, now boldness must decide;
To compass all must all be hazarded;
You must be free before the morning break.
MARY. What say you, sir — to-night? — impossible!
MORT. Hear what has been resolv'd: — I led my friends
Into a private chapel, where a priest
Heard our confession, and, for ev'ry sin
We had committed, gave us absolution;
He gave us absolution too, beforehand,
For ev'ry crime we might commit in future,
He gave us too the final sacrament,
And we are ready for the final journey.
MARY. O! what an awful, dreadful preparation.
MORT. We scale, this very night, the castle's walls;
The keys are in my pow'r; the guards we murder!
Then from thy chamber bear thee forcibly.
Each living soul must die beneath our hands,
That none remain who might disclose the deed.
MARY. And Drury, Paulet, my two keepers, they
Would sooner spill their dearest drop of blood.
MORT. They fall the very first beneath my steel.
MARY. What, sir! Your uncle? How! Your second father!

MORT. Must perish by my hand — I murder him!
MARY. O, bloody outrage!
MORT. We have been absolv'd
Beforehand; I may perpetrate the worst; —
I can, I will do so!
MARY. O dreadful, dreadful!
MORT. And should I be oblig'd to kill the queen,
I've sworn upon the Host, it must be done!
MARY. No, Mortimer; ere so much blood for me —
MORT. What is the life of all, compar'd to thee,
And to my love? The bond which holds the world
Together may be loos'd, a second deluge
Come rolling on, and swallow all creation!
Henceforth I value nothing; ere I quit
My hold on thee, may earth and time be ended!
MARY. (*retiring*) Heav'ns! Sir, what language, and what looks! They scare,
They frighten me!
MORT. (*with unsteady looks, expressive of quiet madness*) Life's but a moment — death
Is but a moment too. Why! let them drag me
To Tyburn, let them tear me limb from limb,
With red-hot pincers —
[*Violently approaching her with extended arms.*
If I clasp but thee
Within my arms, thou fervently belov'd!
MARY. Madman, avaunt!
MORT. To rest upon this bosom,
To press upon this passion-breathing mouth —
MARY. Leave me, for God's sake, sir; let me go in —
MORT. He is a madman who neglects to clasp
His bliss in folds that never may be loosed,
When Heav'n has kindly giv'n it to his arms.
I will deliver you, and though it cost
A thousand lives, I do it: but I swear,
As God's in heav'n, I will possess you too!

MARY. O! Will no God, no angel shelter me?
Dread destiny! thou throw'st me, in thy wrath,
From one tremendous terror to the other!
Was I then born to waken nought but frenzy?
Do hate and love conspire alike to fright me?

MORT. Yes, glowing as their hatred is my love;
They would behead thee, they would wound this neck
So dazzling white, with the disgraceful axe!
O! offer to the living god of joy
What thou must sacrifice to bloody hate!
Inspire thy happy lover with those charms
Which are no more thine own. Those golden locks
Are forfeit to the dismal pow'rs of death,
O! use them to entwine thy slave for ever!

MARY. Alas! alas! what language must I hear!
My woe, my suff'rings should be sacred to you,
Although my royal brows are so no more.

MORT. The crown is fallen from thy brows, thou hast
No more of earthly majesty. Make trial,
Raise thy imperial voice, see if a friend,
If a deliverer, will rise to save you.
Thy moving form alone remains, the high,
The godlike influence of thy heav'nly beauty;
This bids me venture all, this arms my hand
With might, and drives me tow'rds the headsman's axe.

MARY. O! Who will save me from his raging madness?

MORT. Service that's bold demands a bold reward.
Why shed their blood the daring? Is not life
Life's highest good? And he a madman, who
Casts life away? First will I take my rest
Upon that breast that glows with love's own fire!
[*He presses her violently to his bosom.*

MARY. Oh, must I call for help against the man
Who would deliver me!

MORT. Thou'rt not unfeeling,
The world ne'er censur'd thee for frigid rigour;
The fervent pray'r of love can touch thy heart.
Thou mad'st the minstrel Rizzio blest, and gavest
Thyself a willing prey to Bothwell's arms.
MARY. Presumptuous man!
MORT. *He* was indeed thy tyrant,
Thou trembled'st at his rudeness, whilst thou lov'd'st him;
Well then — if only terror can obtain thee —
By the infernal gods!
MARY. Away — you're mad!
MORT. I'll teach thee then before *me* too to tremble —
KEN. (*entering suddenly*) They're coming — they approach — the park is fill'd
With men in arms.
MORT. (*starting, and catching at his sword*) I will defend you — I —
MARY. O Hannah! save me, save me from his hands.
Where shall I find, poor suff'rer, an asylum?
O! to what saint shall I address my pray'rs?
Here force assails me, and within is murder!
[*She flies toward the house,* KENNEDY *follows her.*

SCENE VII.

MORTIMER, PAULET, *and* DRURY *rush in in the greatest consternation. — Attendants hasten over the Stage.*

PAUL. Shut all the portals — draw the bridges up —
MORT. What is the matter, uncle?
PAUL. Where is the murd'ress?
Down with her, down into the darkest dungeon!

MORT. What is the matter? What has pass'd?
PAUL. The queen!
Accursed hand! Infernal machination!
MORT. The queen! What queen?
PAUL. What queen!
The queen of England;—
She has been murder'd on the road to London.
[*Hastens into the house.*

SCENE VIII.

MORTIMER, *soon after*, O'KELLY.

MORT. (*after a pause*) Am I then mad? Came not one running by
But now, and cried aloud, The queen is murder'd!
No, no! I did but dream. A fev'rish fancy
Paints that upon my mind as true and real
Which but existed in my frantic thoughts.
Who's there? It is O'Kelly. So dismay'd!
O'KEL. (*rushing in*) Flee, Mortimer, O! flee — for all is lost!
MORT. What then is lost?
O'KEL. Stand not on question. Think
On speedy flight.
MORT. What has occurred?
O'KEL. Sauvage,
That madman, struck the blow.
MORT. It is then true!
O'KEL. True, true — O! save yourself.
MORT. (*exultingly*) The queen is murdered —
And Mary shall ascend the English throne!
O'KEL. Is murder'd! Who said that?
MORT. Yourself.
O'KEL. She lives.
And I, and you, and all of us, are lost.

MORT. She lives!
O'KEL. The blow was badly aim'd, her cloak
Receiv'd it. Shrewsbury disarm'd the murd'rer.
MORT. She lives!
O'KEL. She lives to whelm us all in ruin;
Come, they surround the park already; come —
MORT. Who did this frantic deed?
O'KEL. It was the monk
From Toulon, whom you saw immers'd in thought,
As in the chapel the Pope's bull was read,
Which pour'd anathemas upon the queen.
He wish'd to take the nearest, shortest way,
To free, with one bold stroke, the Church of God,
And gain the crown of martyrdom: — he trusted
His purpose only to the priest, and struck
The fatal blow upon the road to London.
MORT. (*after a long silence*) Alas! a fierce destructive fate pursues thee,
Unhappy one! Yes — now thy death is fix'd;
Thy very angel has prepar'd thy fall!
O'KEL. Say, whither will you take your flight? I go
To hide me in the forests of the north.
MORT. Fly thither, and may God attend your flight;
I will remain, and still attempt to save
My love; if not, my bed shall be upon her grave.
[*Exeunt at different sides.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *Antechamber.*

COUNT AUBESPINE, *the* EARLS *of* KENT *and* LEICESTER.

AUB. How fares her Majesty? My lords, you see me
Still stunn'd, and quite beside myself for terror.
How happen'd it? How was it possible
That, in the midst of this most loyal people —
LEIC. The deed was not attempted by the people.
The assassin was a subject of your king,
A Frenchman.
AUB. Sure a lunatic.
LEIC. A papist,
Count Aubespine!

SCENE II.

Enter BURLEIGH *in conversation with* DAVISON.

BUR. Sir, let the death-warrant
Be instantly made out, and pass the seal;
Then let it be presented to the queen;
Her Majesty must sign it. Hasten, sir,
We have no time to lose.
DAV. It shall be done. [*Exit.*
AUB. My lord high treasurer, my faithful heart
Shares in the just rejoicings of the realm.
Prais'd be almighty Heaven who hath averted
Assassination from our much-lov'd queen!
BUR. Prais'd be his name, who thus hath turn'd to scorn
The malice of our foes!
AUB. May Heav'n confound
The perpetrator of this cursed deed!

BUR. Its perpetrator and its base contriver!
AUB. Please you, my lord, to bring me to the queen,
That I may lay the warm congratulations
Of my imperial master at her feet.
BUR. There is no need of this.
AUB. (*officiously*) My Lord of Burleigh,
I know my duty.
BUR. Sir, your duty is
To quit, and that without delay, this kingdom.
AUB. (*stepping back with surprise*) What! How is this?
BUR. The sacred character
Of an ambassador to-day protects you,
But not to-morrow.
AUB. What's my crime?
BUR. Should I
Once name it, there were then no pardon for it.
AUB. I hope, my lord, my charge's privilege —
BUR. Screens not a traitor.
LEIC. *and* KENT. Traitor! How?
AUB. My lord,
Consider well —
BUR. Your passport was discover'd
In the assassin's pocket.
KENT. Righteous Heaven!
AUB. Sir, many passports are subscrib'd by me,
I cannot know the secret thoughts of men.
BUR. He in your house confess'd, and was absolv'd —
AUB. My house is open —
BUR. To *our* enemies.
AUB. I claim a strict inquiry —
BUR. Tremble at it —
AUB. My monarch in my person is insulted,
He will annul the marriage contract.
BUR. *That*
My royal mistress has annull'd already;

England will not unite herself with France.
My Lord of Kent, I give to you the charge
To see Count Aubespine embark'd in safety.
The furious populace has storm'd his palace,
Where a whole arsenal of arms was found;
Should he be found, they'll tear him limb from limb,
Conceal him till their fury is abated, —
You answer for his life.

AUB. I go — I leave
This kingdom, where they sport with public treaties,
And trample on the laws of nations. Yet
My monarch, be assur'd, will vent his rage
In direst vengeance!

BUR. Let him seek it here.

[*Exeunt* KENT *and* AUBESPINE.

SCENE III.

LEICESTER, BURLEIGH.

LEIC. And thus you loose, yourself, the knot of union
Which you officiously, uncall'd for, bound!
You have deserv'd but little of your country,
My lord; this trouble was superfluous.

BUR. My aim was good, though fate declared against it;
Happy is he who has so fair a conscience!

LEIC. Well know we the mysterious mein of Burleigh
When he is on the hunt for deeds of treason.
Now you are in your element, my lord;
A monstrous outrage has been just committed,
And darkness veils, as yet, its perpetrators: —
Now will a court of inquisition rise;
Each word, each look, be weigh'd; men's very thoughts

Be summon'd to the bar. You are, my lord,
The mighty man, the Atlas of the state,
All England's weight lies upon your shoulders.
BUR. In you, my lord, I recognise my master;
For such a victory as your eloquence
Has gain'd I cannot boast.
LEIC. What means your lordship?
BUR. You were the man who knew, behind my back,
To lure the queen to Fotheringay castle.
LEIC. Behind your back! When did I fear to act
Before your face?
BUR. *You* led her Majesty?
O, no — *you* led her not — it was the queen
Who was so gracious as to lead *you* thither.
LEIC. What mean you, my lord, by that?
BUR. The noble part
You forc'd the queen to play! The glorious triumph
Which you prepar'd for her! Too gracious princess!
So shamelessly, so wantonly to mock
Thy unsuspecting goodness, to betray thee
So pitiless to thy exulting foe!
This, then, is the magnanimity, the grace,
Which suddenly possess'd you in the council!
The Stuart is for this so despicable,
So weak an enemy, that it would scarce
Be worth the pains to stain us with her blood.
A specious plan! and sharply pointed too;
'Tis only pity this sharp point is broken.
LEIC. Unworthy wretch! — this instant follow me,
And answer at the throne this insolence.
BUR. You'll find me there, my lord; and look you well,
That *there* your eloquence desert you not. [*Exit.*

Scene IV.

Leicester, *alone; then* Mortimer.

Leic. I am detected! All my plot's disclos'd!
How has my evil genius track'd my steps!
Alas! if he has proofs, if she should learn
That I have held a secret correspondence
With her worst enemy; how criminal
Shall I appear to her! How false will then
My counsel seem, and all the fatal pains
I took to lure the queen to Fotheringay!
I've shamefully betray'd, I have exposed her
To her detested enemy's revilings!
O! never, never can she pardon that.
All will appear as if premeditated.
The bitter turn of this sad interview,
The triumph and the tauntings of her rival;
Yes, e'en the murd'rous hand, which had prepar'd
A bloody, monstrous, unexpected fate;
All, all will be ascrib'd to my suggestions!
I see no rescue! — nowhere — Ha! Who comes?

[Mortimer *enters, in the most violent uneasiness, and looks with apprehension around him.*

Mort. Lord Leicester! Is it you? Are we alone?
Leic. Ill-fated wretch, away! What seek you here?
Mort. They are upon our track — upon yours too,
Be vigilant!
Leic. Away, away!
Mort. They know
That private conferences have been held
At Aubespine's —
Leic. What's that to me?
Mort. They know, too,
That the assassin —

LEIC. That is your affair —
Audacious wretch! to dare to mix my name
In your detested outrage: go; defend
Your bloody deeds yourself!
MORT. But only hear me.
LEIC. (*violently enraged*) Down, down to hell! Why cling you at my heels
Like an infernal spirit? I disclaim you —
I know you not — I make no common cause
With murderers!
MORT. You will not hear me, then!
I came to warn you — *you* too are detected.
LEIC. How! What?
MORT. Lord Burleigh went to Fotheringay,
Just as the luckless deed had been attempted:
Search'd with strict scrutiny the queen's apartments,
And found there —
LEIC. What?
MORT. A letter, which the queen
Had just addressed to you —
LEIC. Unhappy woman! —
MORT. In which she calls on you to keep your word,
Renews the promise of her hand, and mentions
The picture which she sent you.
LEIC. Death and hell!
MORT. Lord Burleigh has the letter —
LEIC. I am lost!
[*During the following speech of* MORTIMER, LEICESTER *goes up and down, as in despair.*
MORT. Improve the moment; be beforehand with him,
And save yourself — save her! An oath can clear
Your fame; contrive excuses to avert
The worst. *I* am disarm'd, can do no more;
My comrades are dispers'd — to pieces fall'n
Our whole confed'racy. For Scotland I,

To rally such new friends as there I may.
'Tis now your turn, my lord — try what your weight,
What bold assurance can effect.

LEIC. (*stops suddenly, as if resolved*) I will —
[*Goes to the door, opens it and calls.*
Who waits without? Guards! seize this wretched traitor!
[*To the Officer, who comes in with soldiers.*
And guard him closely! A most dreadful plot
Is brought to light — I'll to her Majesty.

MORT. (*stands for a time petrified with wonder; collects himself soon, and follows* LEICESTER *with his looks expressive of the most sovereign contempt*)
Infamous wretch! — But I deserve it all.
Who told me then to trust this practis'd villain?
Now o'er my head he strides, and on my fall
He builds the bridge of safety! — be it so,
Go, save thyself — my lips are seal'd for ever; —
I will not join e'en thee in my destruction —
I would not own thee, no, not e'en in death;
Life is the faithless villain's only good!
[*To the Officer of the Guard, who steps forward to seize him.*
What wilt thou, slave of tyranny, with me?
I laugh to scorn thy threat'nings — I am free.
[*Drawing a dagger.*

OFFIC. He's arm'd; — rush in, and wrest his weapon from him.
[*They rush upon him; he defends himself.*

MORT. (*raising his voice*) And in this latest moment, shall my heart
Expand itself in freedom, and my tongue
Shall break this long constraint. Curse and destruction
Light on you all, who have betray'd your faith,
Your God, and your true sov'reign! Who, alike

To earthly Mary false as to the heav'nly,
Have said your duties to this bastard queen!

OFFIC. Hear you these blasphemies? Rush forward — seize him!

MORT. Beloved queen! I could not set thee free;
Yet take a lesson from me how to die.
Mary, thou holy one, O! pray for me!
And take me to thy heav'nly home on high!

[*Stabs himself and falls into the arms of the Guard.*

SCENE V.

The Apartment of the Queen.

ELIZABETH, *with a letter in her hand,* BURLEIGH.

ELIZ. To lure me thither! trifle with me thus!
The traitor! Thus to lead me, as in triumph,
Into the presence of his paramour!
O, Burleigh! ne'er was woman so deceiv'd.

BUR. I cannot yet conceive what potent means,
What magic he exerted, to surprise
My queen's accustom'd prudence.

ELIZ. O, I die
For shame! How must he laugh to scorn my weakness!
I thought to humble *her*, and was myself
The object of her bitter scorn.

BUR. By this
You see how faithfully I counsell'd you.

ELIZ. O, I am sorely punish'd, that I turn'd
My ear from your wise counsels; yet I thought
I might confide in him. Who could suspect,
Beneath the vows of faithfullest devotion,
A deadly snare? In whom can I confide,
When he deceives me? He, whom I have made

The greatest of the great, and ever set
The nearest to my heart, and in this court
Allow'd to play the master and the king.
BUR. Yet in that very moment he betray'd you,
Betray'd you to this wily Queen of Scots.
ELIZ. O, she shall pay me for it with her life!
Is the death-warrant ready?
BUR. 'Tis prepar'd
As you commanded.
ELIZ. She shall surely die —
He shall behold her fall, and fall himself!
I've driven him from my heart. No longer love,
Revenge alone is there: and high as once
He stood, so low and shameful be his fall!
A monument of my severity,
As once the proud example of my weakness.
Conduct him to the Tower; let a commission
Of peers be nam'd to try him. He shall feel
In its full weight the rigour of the law.
BUR. But he will seek thy presence; he will clear —
ELIZ. How can he clear himself? Does not the letter
Convict him? O, his crimes are manifest!
BUR. But thou art mild and gracious! His appearance,
His pow'rful presence —
ELIZ. I will never see him;
No never, never more. Are orders giv'n,
Not to admit him, should he come?
BUR. 'Tis done.
PAGE. (*entering*) The Earl of Leicester!
ELIZ. The presumptuous man!
I will not see him. Tell him that I will not.
PAGE. I am afraid to bring my lord this message,
Nor would he credit it.
ELIZ. And I have raised him

So high that my own servants tremble more
At him than at me!

BUR. (*to the* PAGE) The queen forbids his presence. [*The* PAGE *retires slowly.*

ELIZ. (*after a pause*) Yet, if it still were possible? If he
Could clear himself? Might it not be a snare,
Laid by the cunning one, to sever me
From my best friend — the ever treach'rous harlot!
She might have writ the letter but to raise
Pois'nous suspicion in my heart, to ruin
The man she hates.

BUR. Yet, gracious queen, consider —

SCENE VI.

LEICESTER (*bursts open the door with violence, and enters with an imperious air*).

LEIC. Fain would I see the shameless man who dares
Forbid me the apartments of my queen! —

ELIZ. (*avoiding his sight*) Audacious slave!

LEIC. To turn me from the door!
If for a Burleigh she be visible,
She must be so to me!

BUR. My lord, you are
Too bold, without permission to intrude —

LEIC. My lord, you are too arrogant, to take
The lead in these apartments. What! Permission!
I know of none who stands so high at court
As to permit my doings, or refuse them.
[*Humbly approaching* ELIZABETH.
'Tis from my sov'reign's lips alone that *I* —

ELIZ. (*without looking at him*) Out of my sight, deceitful, worthless traitor!

LEIC. 'Tis not my gracious queen I hear, but Burleigh,
My enemy, in these ungentle words.
To my imperial mistress I appeal;
Thou hast lent him thine ear; I ask the like.
ELIZ. Speak, shameless wretch! Increase your crime — deny it —
LEIC. Dismiss this troublesome intruder first.
Withdraw, my lord; it is not of your office
To play the third man here: between the queen
And me there is no need of witnesses.
Retire —
ELIZ. (*to* BURLEIGH) Remain, my lord; 'tis my command.
LEIC. What has a third to do 'twixt thee and me?
I have to clear myself before my queen,
My worship'd queen; I will maintain the rights
Which thou hast given me: these rights are sacred,
And I insist upon it, that my lord
Retire.
ELIZ. This haughty tone befits you well.
LEIC. It well befits me; am not I the man,
The happy man, to whom thy gracious favour
Has giv'n the highest station? this exalts me
Above this Burleigh, and above them all.
Thy heart imparted me this rank, and what
Thy favour gave, by Heav'ns I will maintain
At my life's hazard! Let him go, it needs
Two moments only to exculpate me.
ELIZ. Think not, with cunning words, to hide the truth.
LEIC. That fear from him, so voluble of speech:
But what I say, is to the heart address'd;
And I will justify what I have dar'd
To do, confiding in thy gen'rous favour,
Before thy heart alone. I recognise
No other jurisdiction.

ELIZ. Base deceiver!
'Tis this, e'en this, which above all condemns you.
My lord, produce the letter. [*To* BURLEIGH.
BUR. Here it is.
LEIC. (*running over the letter without losing his presence of mind*) 'Tis Mary Stuart's hand —
ELIZ. Read, and be dumb!
LEIC. (*having read it quietly*) Appearance is against me; yet I hope
I shall not by appearances be judg'd.
ELIZ. Can you deny your secret correspondence
With Mary? — that *she* sent, and *you* receiv'd
Her picture, that you gave her hopes of rescue?
LEIC. It were an easy matter, if I felt
That I were guilty of a crime, to challenge
The testimony of my enemy:
Yet bold is my good conscience. I confess
That she hath said the truth.
ELIZ. Well then, thou wretch!
BUR. His own words sentence him —
ELIZ. Out of my sight!
Away! Conduct the traitor to the Tow'r!
LEIC. I am no traitor; it was wrong, I own,
To make a secret of this step to thee; —
Yet pure was my intention, it was done
To search into her plots and to confound them.
ELIZ. Vain subterfuge!
BUR. And do you think, my lord —
LEIC. I've play'd a dang'rous game, I know it well,
And none but Leicester dare be bold enough
To risk it at this court. The world must know
How I detest this Stuart, and the rank
Which here I hold; my monarch's confidence,
With which she honours me, must sure suffice
To overturn all doubt of my intentions.
Well may the man thy favour above all

Distinguishes pursue a daring course
To do his duty!
BUR. If the course was good,
Wherefore conceal it?
LEIC. You are us'd, my lord,
To prate before you act — the very chime
Of your own deeds. This is your manner, lord.
But mine is first to act, and then to speak.
BUR. Yes; now you speak, because you must.
LEIC. (*measuring him proudly and disdainfully with his eyes*) And *you*
Boast of a wonderful, a mighty action,
That *you* have sav'd the queen, have snatch'd away
The mask from treach'ry: — all is known to *you;*
You think, forsooth, that nothing can escape
Your penetrating eyes. Poor, idle boaster!
In spite of all your cunning, Mary Stuart
Was free to-day, had *I* not hinder'd it.
BUR. How? *you*?
LEIC. Yes *I*, my lord: the queen confided
In Mortimer; she open'd to the youth
Her inmost soul! Yes, she went farther still;
She gave him too a secret bloody charge,
Which Paulet had before refus'd with horror.
Say, is it so, or not?
[*The* QUEEN *and* BURLEIGH *look at one another with astonishment.*
BUR. Whence know you this?
LEIC. Nay, is it not a fact? Now answer me!
And where, my lord, where were your thousand eyes,
Not to discover Mortimer was false?
That he, the Guise's tool, and Mary's creature,
A raging papist, daring fanatic,
Was come to free the Stuart and to murder
The Queen of England!
ELIZ. (*with the utmost astonishment*) How! This Mortimer?

LEIC. 'Twas he through whom our correspondence pass'd:
This plot it was which introduc'd me to him.
This very day she was to have been torn
From her confinement; he, this very moment,
Disclos'd his plan to me: I took him pris'ner,
And gave him to the guard, when in despair
To see his work o'erturn'd, himself unmask'd,
He slew himself!
ELIZ. O, I indeed have been
Deceiv'd beyond example, Mortimer!
BUR. This happen'd then but now? Since last we parted?
LEIC. For my own sake, I must lament the deed —
That he was thus cut off. His testimony,
Were he alive, had fully clear'd my fame,
And freed me from suspicion: — 'twas for this
That I surrender'd him to open justice.
I thought to choose the most impartial course
To verify and fix my innocence
Before the world.
BUR. He kill'd himself, you say!
Is't so? Or did you kill him?
LEIC. Vile suspicion!
Hear but the guard who seiz'd him.
[*He goes to the door, and calls.*
Ho! Who waits?
[*Enter the Officer of the Guard.*
Sir, tell the queen how Mortimer expir'd.
OFFIC. I was on duty in the palace porch,
When suddenly my lord threw wide the door,
And order'd me to take the knight in charge,
Denouncing him a traitor: upon this
He grew enrag'd, and with most bitter curses
Against our sov'reign, and our holy faith,
He drew a dagger, and before the guards

Could hinder his intention, plung'd the steel
Into his heart, and fell a lifeless corpse.
LEIC. 'Tis well; you may withdraw. Her Majesty
Has heard enough. [*The Officer withdraws.*
ELIZ. O! what a deep abyss
Of monstrous deeds!
LEIC. Who was it then, my queen,
Who sav'd you? Was it Burleigh? Did he know
The dangers which surrounded you? Did he
Avert them from your head? Your faithful Leicester
Was your good angel.
BUR. This same Mortimer
Died most conveniently for *you*, my lord.
What I should say I know not. I believe you,
And I believe you not: — I think you guilty,
And yet I think you not. A curse on her
Who caus'd me all this anguish!
LEIC. She must die —
I now myself consent unto her death.
I formerly advis'd you to suspend
The sentence, till some arm should rise anew
On her behalf; the case has happen'd now,
And I demand her instant execution.
BUR. You give this counsel? *You?*
LEIC. Howe'er it wound
My feelings to be forc'd to this extreme,
Yet now I see most clearly, now I feel
That the queen's welfare asks this bloody victim.
'Tis my proposal, therefore, that the writ
Be drawn at once, to fix the execution.
BUR. (*to the* QUEEN) Since then his lordship shows such earnest zeal,
Such loyalty, 'twere well, were he appointed
To see the execution of the sentence.
LEIC. Who? *I?*
BUR. Yes, *you;* you surely ne'er could find
A better means to shake off the suspicion

Which rests upon you still, than to command
Her, whom 'tis said you love, to be beheaded.
ELIZ. (*looking steadfastly at* LEICESTER) My lord advises well. So be it then!
LEIC. It were but fit that my exalted rank
Should free me from so mournful a commission,
Which would indeed, in ev'ry sense, become
A Burleigh better than the Earl of Leicester.
The man who stands so near the royal person
Should have no knowledge of such fatal scenes:
But yet, to prove my zeal, to satisfy
My queen, I waive my charge's privilege,
And take upon myself this hateful duty.
ELIZ. Lord Burleigh shall partake this duty with you, [*To* BURLEIGH.
So be the warrant instantly prepar'd.
[BURLEIGH *withdraws; a tumult heard without.*

SCENE VII.

The QUEEN, *the* EARL OF KENT.

ELIZ. How now, my Lord of Kent? What uproar's this
I hear without?
KENT. My queen, it is thy people,
Who, round the palace rang'd, impatiently
Demand to see their sov'reign.
ELIZ. What's their wish?
KENT. A panic terror has already spread
Through London, that thy life has been attempted;
That murderers commission'd from the Pope
Beset thee; that the Catholics have sworn
To rescue from her prison Mary Stuart,
And to proclaim her queen. Thy loyal people

Believe it, and are mad — her head alone
Can quiet them — this day must be her last.
ELIZ. How! Will they force me then?
KENT. They are resolv'd —

SCENE VIII.

Enter BURLEIGH *and* DAVISON *with a paper.*

ELIZ. Well, Davison?
DAV. (*approaches earnestly*) Your orders are obey'd,
My queen —
ELIZ. What orders, sir?
[*As she is about to take the paper she shudders, and starts back.*
O God! —
BUR. Obey
Thy people's voice; it is the voice of God.
ELIZ. (*irresolute, as if in contest with herself*) O, my good lord, who will assure me now
That what I hear is my whole people's voice,
The voice of all the world! Ah! much I fear,
That, if I now should listen to the wish
Of the wild multitude, a diff'rent voice
Might soon be heard; — and that the very men
Who now by force oblige me to this step
May, when 'tis taken, heavily condemn me!

SCENE IX.

Enter the EARL OF SHREWSBURY (*who enters with great emotion*).

Hold fast, my queen, they wish to hurry thee;
[*Seeing* DAVISON *with the paper.*
Be firm — Or is it then decided? — is it

Indeed decided? I behold a paper
Of ominous appearance in his hand;
Let it not at this moment meet thy eyes,
My queen! —

ELIZ. Good Shrewsbury! I am constrain'd —

SHREW. Who can constrain thee? Thou art Queen of England,
Here must thy Majesty assert its rights:
Command those savage voices to be silent,
Who take upon themselves to put constraint
Upon thy royal will, to rule thy judgment.
Fear only, blind conjecture, moves thy people;
Thou art thyself beside thyself; thy wrath
Is grievously provok'd: thou art but mortal,
And canst not thus ascend the judgment seat.

BUR. Judgment has long been past. It is not now
The time to speak, but execute the sentence.

KENT. (*who, on* SHREWSBURY'S *entry, had retired, comes back*)
The tumult gains apace; there are no means
To moderate the people.

ELIZ. (*to* SHREWSBURY) See, my lord,
How they press on.

SHREW. I only ask a respite;
A single word trac'd by thy hand decides
The peace, the happiness of all thy life!
Thou hast for years consider'd, let not then
A moment rul'd by passion hurry thee —
But a short respite — recollect thyself!
Wait for a moment of tranquillity.

BUR. (*violently*) Wait for it — pause — delay — till flames of fire
Consume the realm; until the fifth attempt
Of murder be successful! God, indeed,
Hath thrice deliver'd thee; thy late escape
Was marvellous, and to expect again
A miracle would be to tempt thy God!

SHREW. That God, whose potent hand hath thrice preserv'd thee,
Who lent my aged feeble arm the strength
To overcome the madman: — he deserves
Thy confidence. I will not raise the voice
Of justice now, for now is not the time;
Thou canst not hear it in this storm of passion.
Yet listen but to this! Thou tremblest now
Before this living Mary — tremble rather
Before the murder'd, the beheaded Mary.
She will arise, and quit her grave, will range
A fiend of discord, an avenging ghost
Around thy realm, and turn thy people's hearts
From their allegiance. For as yet the Britons
Hate her, because they fear her; but most surely
Will they avenge her, when she is no more.
They will no more behold the enemy
Of their belief, they will but see in her
The much-lamented issue of their kings
A sacrifice to jealousy and hate.
Then quickly shalt thou see the sudden change
When thou hast done the bloody deed; then go
Through London, seek thy people, which till now
Around thee swarm'd delighted; thou shalt see
Another England, and another people;
For then no more the godlike dignity
Of justice, which subdued thy subjects' hearts,
Will beam around thee. Fear, the dread ally
Of tyranny, will shudd'ring march before thee,
And make a wilderness in ev'ry street —
The last, extremest crime thou hast committed.
What head is safe, if the anointed fall?

ELIZ. Ah! Shrewsbury, you sav'd my life, you turn'd
The murd'rous steel aside; why let you not
The dagger take its course? then all these broils
Would have been ended; then, releas'd from doubt,
And free from blame, I should be now at rest

In my still peaceful grave. In very sooth,
I'm weary of my life, and of my crown.
If Heav'n decree that one of us two queens
Must perish, to secure the other's life —
And sure it must be so — Why should not I
Be she who yields? My people must decide;
I give them back the sovereignty they gave.
God is my witness, that I have not liv'd
For my own sake, but for my people's welfare.
If they expect from this false, fawning Stuart,
The younger sovereign, more happy days,
I will descend with pleasure from the throne,
Again repair to Woodstock's quiet bowers
Where once I spent my unambitious youth;
Where far remov'd from all the vanities
Of earthly power, I found within myself
True Majesty. I am not made to rule —
A ruler should be made of sterner stuff:
My heart is soft and tender. I have govern'd,
These many years, this kingdom happily,
But then I only needed to make happy:
Now, comes my first important regal duty,
And now I feel how weak a thing I am.

BUR. Now, by mine honour, when I hear my queen,
My royal liege, speak such unroyal words,
I should betray my office, should betray
My country, were I longer to be silent.
You say you love your people 'bove yourself,
Now prove it. Choose not peace for your own heart,
And leave your kingdom to the storms of discord.
Think on the Church. Shall, with this papist queen,
The ancient superstition be renew'd?
The monk resume his sway, the Roman legate
In pomp march hither; lock our churches up,
Dethrone our monarchs? I demand of you
The souls of all your subjects — as you now
Shall act, they all are sav'd, or all are lost!

Here is no time for mercy; — to promote
Your people's welfare is your highest duty.
If Shrewsbury has sav'd your life, then I
Will save both you, and England — that is more!
ELIZ. I would be left alone. No consolation,
No counsel, can be drawn from human aid
In this conjecture: — I will lay my doubts
Before the judge of all: — I am resolv'd
To act as He shall teach. Withdraw, my lords.
[*To* DAVISON, *who lays the paper on the table.*
You, sir, remain in waiting — close at hand.
[*The lords withdraw;* SHREWSBURY *alone stands for a few moments before the* QUEEN, *regards her significantly, then withdraws slowly, and with an expression of the deepest anguish.*

SCENE X.

ELIZABETH *alone.*

O! servitude of popularity!
Disgraceful slavery! How weary am I
Of flattering this idol, which my soul
Despises in its inmost depth! O! when
Shall I once more be free upon this throne?
I must respect the people's voice, and strive
To win the favour of the multitude,
And please the fancies of a mob, whom nought
But jugglers' tricks delight. O call not him
A king, who needs must please the world: 'tis he
Alone, who in his actions does not heed
The fickle approbation of mankind.
Have I then practis'd justice, all my life
Shunn'd each despotic deed; have I done this,
Only to bind my hands against this first,
This necessary act of violence?

My own example now condemns myself!
Had I but been a tyrant, like my sister,
My predecessor, I could fearless then
Have shed this royal blood: — but am I now
Just by my own free choice? No — I was forc'd
By stern necessity to use this virtue;
Necessity, which binds e'en monarch's wills.
Surrounded by my foes, my people's love
Alone supports me on my envied throne.
All Europe's pow'rs confederate to destroy me;
The Pope's inveterate decree declares me
Accursed and excommunicated. France
Betrays me with a kiss, and Spain prepares
At sea a fierce exterminating war;
Thus stand I, in contention with the world,
A poor defenceless woman: I must seek
To veil the spot in my imperial birth
By which my father cast disgrace upon me:
In vain with princely virtues would I hide it;
The envious hatred of my enemies
Uncovers it, and places Mary Stuart
A threat'ning fiend before me evermore!
[*Walking up and down, with quick and agitated steps.*
O no! this fear must end. Her head must fall!
I *will* have peace. She is the very fury
Of my existence; a tormenting demon,
Which destiny has fasten'd on my soul.
Wherever I had planted me a comfort,
A flatt'ring hope, my way was ever cross'd
By this infernal viper! She has torn
My fav'rite, and my destined bridegroom from me.
The hated name of ev'ry ill I feel
Is Mary Stuart — were but she no more
On earth, I should be free as mountain air.
[*Standing still.*
With what disdain did she look down on me,
As if her eye should blast me like the lightning!

Poor feeble wretch! I bear far other arms,
Their touch is mortal, and thou art no more.
[*Advancing to the table hastily, and taking the pen.*
I am a bastard, am I? Hapless wretch,
I am but so the while thou liv'st and breath'st.
[Thy death will make my birth legitimate.]
The moment I destroy thee, is the doubt
Destroy'd, which hangs o'er my imperial right.
As soon as England has no other choice,
My mother's honour and my birthright triumphs!
[*She signs with resolution; lets her pen then fall, and steps back with an expression of terror. — After a pause she rings.*

Scene XI.

Elizabeth, Davison.

Eliz. Where are their lordships?
Dav. They are gone to quell
The tumult of the people. The alarm
Was instantly appeas'd, when they beheld
The Earl of Shrewsbury. That's he! exclaim'd
A hundred voices — that's the man — he sav'd
The queen; hear *him* — the bravest man in England!
And now began the gallant Talbot, blam'd
In gentle words the people's violence,
And used such strong, persuasive eloquence,
That all were pacified, and silently
They slunk away.
Eliz. The fickle multitude!
Which turns with ev'ry wind. Unhappy he
Who leans upon this reed! 'Tis well, Sir William;
You may retire again —
[*As he is going toward the door.*

And, sir, this paper,
Receive it back; I place it in your hands.
DAV. (*casts a look upon the paper, and starts back*)
My gracious queen — thy name! — 'tis then decided.
ELIZ. I had but to subscribe it — I have done so —
A paper sure cannot decide — a name
Kills not —
DAV. Thy name, my queen, beneath this paper,
Is most decisive — kills — 'tis like the lightning,
Which blasteth as it flies! This fatal scroll
Commands the sheriff and commissioners
To take departure straight for Fotheringay,
And to the Queen of Scots announce her death,
Which must at dawn be put in execution.
There is no respite, no discretion, here —
As soon as I have parted with this writ,
Her race is run —
ELIZ. Yes, sir, the Lord has plac'd
This weighty bus'ness in your feeble hands;
Seek him in pray'r, to light you with his wisdom;
I go — and leave you, sir, to do your duty. [*Going.*
DAV. No; leave me not, my queen, till I have heard
Your will. The only wisdom that I need
Is, word for word, to follow your commands.
Say, have you plac'd this warrant in my hands,
To see that it be speedily enforced?
ELIZ. That you must do, as your own prudence dictates.
DAV. (*interrupting her quickly, and alarmed*) Not mine — O God forbid! Obedience is
My only prudence here. No point must now
Be left to be decided by your servant.
A small mistake would here be regicide,
A monstrous crime, from which my soul recoils!
Permit me, in this weighty act, to be
Your passive instrument, without a will; —

Tell me in plain undoubted terms your pleasure,
What with the bloody mandate I should do.

ELIZ. Its name declares its meaning.

DAV. Do you, then,
My liege, command its instant execution?

ELIZ. I said not that; I tremble but to think it.

DAV. Shall I retain it, then, 'til further orders?

ELIZ. At your own risk; you answer the event.

DAV. I! — gracious Heavens! — O speak, my queen, your pleasure!

ELIZ. My pleasure is, that this unhappy bus'ness
Be no more mention'd to me; that at last
I may be freed from it, and that for ever.

DAV. It costs you but a word — determine then;
What shall I do with this mysterious scroll?

ELIZ. I *have* declar'd it, plague me, sir, no longer.

DAV. You *have* declar'd it? say you? O, my queen,
You have said nothing. Please my gracious mistress
But to remember —

ELIZ. (*stamps on the ground*) Insupportable!

DAV. O, be indulgent to me! I have enter'd
Unwittingly, not many months ago,
Upon this office; I know not the language
Of courts and kings. I ever have been rear'd
In simple, open wise, a plain blunt man.
Be patient with me; nor deny your servant
A light to lead him clearly to his duty.

[*He approaches her in a supplicating posture; she turns her back on him; he stands in despair; then speaks with a tone of resolution.*

Take, take again this paper — take it back!
Within my hands, it is a glowing fire.
Select not me, my queen; select not me
To serve you, in this terrible conjuncture.

ELIZ. Go, sir; — fulfil the duty of your office.

[*Exit.*

Scene XII.

Davison, *then* Burleigh.

Dav. She goes! She leaves me doubting, and perplex'd
With this dread paper! How to act I know not;
Should I retain it, should I forward it?
[*To* Burleigh, *who enters.*
Oh! I am glad that you are come, my lord,
'Tis you who have preferr'd me to this charge;
Now free me from it, for I undertook it,
Unknowing how responsible it made me.
Let me then seek again th' obscurity
In which you found me; this is not my place.
Bur. How now? Take courage, sir! Where is the warrant?
The queen was with you.
Dav. She has quitted me
In bitter anger. O advise me, help me.
Save me from this fell agony of doubt!
My lord, here is the warrant: it is sign'd!
Bur. Indeed? O give it, give it me!
Dav. I may not.
Bur. How!
Dav. She has not yet explain'd her final will.
Bur. Explain'd! She has subscrib'd it;—give it me.
Dav. I am to execute it, and I am not.
Great Heavens! I know not what I am to do!
Bur. (*urging more violently*) It must be now, this moment, executed—
The warrant, sir. You're lost if you delay.
Dav. So am I also, if I act too rashly.
Bur. What strange infatuation. Give it me.
[*Snatches the paper from him, and exit with it.*

DAV. What would you? Hold! You will be my destruction!

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Scene the same as in the First Act.

HANNAH KENNEDY *in deep mourning, her eyes still red from weeping, in great but quiet anguish, is employed in sealing letters and parcels. Her sorrow often interrupts her occupation, and she is seen at such intervals to pray in silence.* PAULET *and* DRURY, *also in mourning, enter, followed by many servants, who bear golden and silver vessels, mirrors, paintings, and other valuables, and fill the back part of the stage with them:* PAULET *delivers to the nurse a box of jewels and a paper, and seems to inform her by signs, that it contains the inventory of the effects the* QUEEN *had brought with her. At the sight of these riches, the anguish of the nurse is renewed; she sinks into a deep, gloomy melancholy, during which* DRURY, PAULET, *and the servants, silently retire.*

MELVIL *enters.*

KEN. (*screams aloud, as soon as she observes him*) Melvil! Is't you? Behold I you again?
MEL. Yes, faithful Kennedy, we meet once more.
KEN. After this long, long, painful separation!
MEL. A most unhappy, bitter meeting, this!
KEN. You come —
MEL. To take an everlasting leave
Of my dear queen — to bid a last farewell!

KEN. And now at length, now on the fatal morn
Which brings her death, they grant our royal lady
The presence of her friends. O, worthy sir,
I will not question you, how you have far'd,
Nor tell you all the suff'rings we've endured,
Since you were torn away from us: — alas!
There will be time enough for that hereafter.
O, Melvil, Melvil, why was it our fate
To see the dawn of this unhappy day!

MEL. Let us not melt each other with our grief.
Throughout my whole remaining life, as long
As ever it may be, I'll sit and weep;
A smile shall never more light up these cheeks,
Ne'er will I lay this sable garb aside,
But lead henceforth a life of endless mourning.
Yet on this last sad day, I will be firm;
Pledge me your word to moderate your grief;
And when the rest, of comfort all bereft,
Abandon'd to despair, wail round her, we
Will lead her with heroic resolution,
And be her staff upon the road to death!

KEN. Melvil! You are deceiv'd, if you suppose
The queen has need of our support to meet
Her death with firmness. *She* it is, my friend,
Who will exhibit the undaunted heart.
O! trust me, Mary Stuart will expire
As best becomes a heroine and queen!

MEL. Receiv'd she firmly, then, the sad decree
Of death? — 'tis said, that she was not prepar'd.

KEN. She was not; yet they were far other terrors
Which made our lady shudder: 'twas not death,
But her deliverer, which made her tremble.
Freedom was promis'd us; this very night
Had Mortimer engag'd to bear us hence:
And thus the queen, perplex'd 'twixt hope and fear,
And doubting still if she should trust her honour
And royal person to th' advent'rous youth,

Sat waiting for the morning. On a sudden
We hear a boist'rous tumult in the castle;
Our ears are startled by repeated blows
Of many hammers, and we think we hear
The approach of our deliv'rers: — hope salutes us,
And, suddenly and unresisted, wakes
The sweet desire of life. And now at once
The portals are thrown open — it is Paulet,
Who comes to tell us — that — the carpenters
Erect beneath our feet the murd'rous scaffold!

[*She turns aside, overpowered by excessive anguish.*

MEL. O God in Heav'n! O tell me then, how bore
The queen this terrible vicissitude?

KEN. (*after a pause, in which she has somewhat collected herself*)
Not by degrees can we relinquish life;
Quick, sudden, in the twinkling of an eye
The separation must be made, the change
From temporal, to eternal life; — and God
Imparted to our mistress at this moment
His grace, to cast away each earthly hope,
And firm and full of faith to mount the skies.
No sign of pallid fear dishonour'd her;
No word of mourning, 'til she heard the tidings
Of Leicester's shameful treach'ry, the sad fate
Of the deserving youth, who sacrificed
Himself for her: the deep, the bitter anguish
Of that old knight, who lost, through her, his last,
His only hope; till then she shed no tear, —
'Twas then her tears began to flow, 'twas not
Her own but others' woe which wrung them from her.

MEL. Where is she now? Can you not lead me to her?

KEN. She spent the last remainder of the night
In pray'r, and from her dearest friends she took
Her last farewell in writing: — then she wrote

Her will[1] with her own hand. She now enjoys
A moment of repose, the latest slumber
Refreshes her weak spirits.

MEL. Who attends her?

KEN. None but her women and physician Burgoyn:
You seem to look around you with surprise;
Your eyes appear to ask me what should mean
This show of splendour in the house of death.
O, sir, while yet we lived we suffer'd want;
But at our death plenty returns to us.

SCENE II.

Enter MARGARET CURL.

KEN. How, madam, fares the queen? Is she awake?

CURL. (*drying her tears*) She is already dressed — she asks for you.

KEN. I go; —

[*To* MELVIL, *who seems to wish to accompany her.*
But follow not, until the queen
Has been prepar'd to see you. [*Exit.*

CURL. Melvil, sure,
The ancient steward?

MEL. Yes, the same.

CURL. O, sir,
This is a house which needs no steward now!
Melvil, you come from London; can you give
No tidings of my husband?

MEL. It is said
He will be set at liberty, as soon —

CURL. As soon as our dear queen shall be no more.
O, the unworthy, the disgraceful traitor!

[1] The document is now in the British Museum.

He is our lady's murderer — 'tis said
It was his testimony which condemn'd her.
MEL. 'Tis true.
CURL. O, curse upon him! — be his soul
Condemn'd for ever! — he has borne false witness —
MEL. Think, madam, what you say.
CURL. I will maintain it,
With ev'ry sacred oath, before the court,
I will repeat it in his very face;
The world shall hear of nothing else. I say
That she dies innocent!
MEL. God grant it true!

SCENE III.

Enter HANNAH KENNEDY.

KEN. (*to* CURL) Go, madam, and require a cup of wine —
'Tis for our lady.
MEL. Is the queen then sick?
KEN. She thinks that she is strong; she is deceiv'd
By her heroic courage; she believes
She has no need of nourishment; yet still
A hard and painful task's allotted her.
Her enemies shall not enjoy the triumph;
They shall not say that fear hath blanch'd her cheeks,
When her fatigues have conquer'd human weakness.
MEL. May I approach her?
KEN. She will come herself.

Scene IV.

Enter Burgoyn ; *two women of the chamber follow him, weeping, and in deep mourning.*

Burg. O, Melvil!
Mel. O, Burgoyn! [*They embrace silently.*
First Woman. (*to the* Nurse) She chose to be
Alone: — she wishes, at this awful moment,
For the last time, to commune with her God.

Scene V.

Enter Margaret Curl, *bearing a golden cup of wine ; she places it hastily upon the table, and leans, pale and trembling, against a chair.*

Mel. How, madam! What has frighten'd you?
Ken. O God!
Burg. Speak, madam.
Curl. What, alas! have I beheld!
Mel. Come to yourself, and say what you have seen!
Curl. As I went down the staircase which conducts
To the great hall below, a door stood open;
I look'd into the chamber, and I saw —
O Heav'n!
Mel. What saw you?
Curl. All the walls were hung
With black; a spacious scaffold, too, o'erspread
With sable cloth, was rais'd above the floor,
And in the middle of the scaffold stood
A dreadful sable block! upon it lay
A naked, polish'd axe: — the hall was full

Of cruel people, crowding round the scaffold;
Who, with a horrid thirst for human blood,
Seem'd waiting for the victim!

THE WOMEN. Gracious Heav'n,
Protect our queen!

MEL. Be calm; the queen approaches.

SCENE VI.

Enter MARY *in white and sumptuously arrayed, as for a festival: she wears hanging from her neck, on a row of small beads, an Agnus Dei; a rosary hangs from her girdle; she bears a crucifix in her hand, and a diadem of precious stones binds her hair; her large black veil is thrown back. On her entrance, all present fall back on both sides with the most violent expressions of anguish.* MELVIL *falls involuntarily upon his knees.*

MARY. (*with quiet majesty, looking round the whole circle*)
Why these complaints? Why weep ye? Ye should rather
Rejoice with me, that now at length the end
Of my long woe approaches; that my shackles
Fall off, my prison opens, and my soul
Delighted mounts on seraph's wings, and seeks
The land of everlasting liberty.
When I was offer'd up to the oppression
Of my proud enemy, was forc'd to suffer
Ignoble taunts, and insults most unfitting
A free and sov'reign queen, then was the time
To weep for me; but, as an earnest friend,
Beneficent and healing death approaches.
All the indignities which I have suffer'd
On earth are cover'd by his sable wings.

The most degraded criminal's ennobled
By his last suff'rings, by his final exit;
I feel again the crown upon my brows,
And dignity possess my swelling soul!
[*Advancing a few steps.*
How! Melvil here! My worthy sir, not so;
Arise; you rather come in time to see
The triumph of your mistress, than her death.
One comfort, which I never had expected,
Is granted me; that, after death, my name
Will not be quite abandon'd to my foes;
One friend at least, one partner of my faith,
Will be my witness in the hour of death.
Say, honest Melvil, how you far'd the while
In this inhospitable, hostile land?
For since the time they tore you from my side,
My fears for you have oft depress'd my soul.

MEL. No other evil gall'd me, but my grief
For thee, and that I wanted pow'r to serve thee.

MARY. How fares my chamberlain, old Didier?
But sure the faithful servant long has slept
The sleep of death, for he was full of years.

MEL. God hath not granted him as yet this grace;
He lives to see the grave o'erwhelm thy youth.

MARY. O! could I but have felt, before my death,
The happiness of pressing one descendant
Of the dear blood of Stuart to my bosom.
But I must suffer in a foreign land,
None but my servants to bewail my fate!
Sir, to your loyal bosom I commit
My latest wishes. Bear then, sir, my blessing
To the most Christian king, my royal brother
And the whole royal family of France.
I bless the cardinal, my honour'd uncle,
And also Henry Guise, my noble cousin.
I bless the holy Father, the vicegerent
Of Christ on earth, who will, I trust, bless me.

I bless the King of Spain, who nobly offer'd
Himself as my deliv'rer, my avenger.
They are remember'd in my will: I hope
That they will not despise, how poor soe'er
They be, the presents of a heart which loves them.
[*Turning to her servants.*
I have bequeath'd you to my royal brother
Of France; he will protect you, he will give you
Another country, and a better home;
And if my last desire have any weight,
Stay not in England; let no haughty Briton
Glut his proud heart with your calamities,
Nor see those in the dust, who once were mine.
Swear by this image of our suff'ring Lord
To leave this fatal land, when I'm no more.

MEL. (*touching the crucifix*) I swear obedience, in the name of all.

MARY. What I, though poor and plunder'd, still possess,
Of which I am allow'd to make disposal,
Shall be amongst you shar'd; for I have hope
In this at least, my will may be fulfill'd.
And what I wear upon the way to death,
Is yours — nor envy me, on this occasion,
The pomp of earth upon the road to heav'n.
[*To the ladies of her chamber.*
To you, my Alice, Gertrude, Rosamund,
I leave my pearls, my garments: you are young,
And ornament may still delight your hearts.
You, Margaret, possess the nearest claims,
To you I should be gen'rous: for I leave you
The most unhappy woman of them all.
That I have not aveng'd your husband's fault
On you, I hope my legacy will prove.
The worth of gold, my Hannah, charms not thee;
Nor the magnificence of precious stones:
My memory, I know, will be to thee

The dearest jewel; take this handkerchief,
I work'd it for thee, in the hours of sorrow,
With my own hands, and my hot scalding tears
Are woven in the texture: — you will bind
My eyes with this, when it is time: this last
Sad service I would wish but from my Hannah.

KEN. O Melvil! I cannot support it.

MARY. Come,
Come all, and now receive my last farewell.

[*She stretches forth her hands; the* WOMEN, *violently weeping, fall successively at her feet, and kiss her outstretched hand.*

Marg'ret, farewell — my Alice, fare thee well;
Thanks, Burgoyn, for thy honest faithful service —
Thy lips are hot, my Gertrude: — I have been
Much hated, yet have been as much belov'd.
May a deserving husband bless my Gertrude,
For this warm glowing heart is form'd for love.
Bertha, thy choice is better, thou hadst rather
Become the chaste and pious bride of Heav'n; —
O! haste thee to fulfil thy vows; — the goods
Of earth are all deceitful; — thou may'st learn
This lesson from thy queen. No more; farewell,
Farewell, farewell, my friends, farewell for ever.

[*She turns suddenly from them; all but* MELVIL *retire at different sides.*

SCENE VII.

MARY, MELVIL.

MARY. (*after the others are all gone*) I have arrang'd
all temporal concerns,
And hope to leave the world in debt to none;
Melvil, one thought alone there is which binds

My troubled soul, nor suffers it to fly,
Delighted, and at liberty, to heav'n.
MEL. Disclose it to me; ease your bosom, trust
Your doubts, your sorrows to your faithful friend.
MARY. I see eternity's abyss before me; —
Soon must I stand before the highest judge
And have not yet appeas'd the Holy One.
A priest of my religion is denied me.
And I disdain to take the sacrament,
The holy, heav'nly nourishment, from priests
Of a false faith; I die in the belief
Of my own church, for that alone can save.
MEL. Compose your heart; the fervent pious wish
Is priz'd in heaven as high as the performance.
The might of tyrants can but bind the hands,
The heart's devotion rises free to God,
The word is dead — 'tis faith which brings to life.
MARY. The heart is not sufficient of itself;
Our faith must have some earthly pledge to ground
Its claims to the high bliss of heav'n. For this
Our God became incarnate, and inclos'd
Mysteriously his unseen heav'nly grace
Within the outward figure of a body.
The Church it is, the holy one, the high one,
Which rears for us the ladder up to heav'n: —
'Tis call'd the Catholic — apostolic church, —
For 'tis but gen'ral faith can strengthen faith;
Where thousands worship and adore, the heat
Breaks out in flame, and, borne on eagle wings,
The soul mounts upwards to the heav'n of heav'ns.
Ah! happy they, who for the glad communion
Of pious pray'r meet in the house of God!
The altar is adorn'd, the tapers blaze,
The bell invites, the incense soars on high,
The bishop stands enrob'd, he takes the cup,
And blessing it declares the solemn mystery,
The transformation of the elements;

And the believing people fall delighted
To worship and adore the present Godhead.
Alas! I only am debarr'd from this;
The heav'nly benediction pierces not
My prison walls: its comfort is denied me.

MEL. Yes! it can pierce them — put thy trust in Him
Who is almighty — in the hand of faith,
The wither'd staff can send forth verdant branches;
And he who from the rock call'd living water,
He can prepare an altar in this prison,
Can change —

[*Seizing the cup, which stands upon the table.*
The earthly contents of this cup
Into a substance of celestial grace.

MARY. Melvil! O yes, I understand you, Melvil!
Here is no priest, no church, no sacrament;
But the Redeemer says, "When two or three
Are in my name assembled, I am with them."
What consecrates the priest? Say, what ordains him
To be the Lord's interpreter? — a heart
Devoid of guile, and a reproachless conduct.
Well, then, though unordain'd, be you my priest;
To you will I confide my last confession,
And take my absolution from your lips.

MEL. If then thy heart be with such zeal inflam'd,
I tell thee, that for thine especial comfort,
The Lord may work a miracle. Thou say'st
Here is no priest, no church, no sacrament —
Thou err'st — here *is* a priest — here *is* a God;
A God descends to thee in real presence.

[*At these words he uncovers his head, and shows a Host in a golden vessel.*
I am a priest — to hear thy last confession,
And to announce to thee the peace of God
Upon thy way to death. I have receiv'd
Upon my head the seven consecrations.

I bring thee, from his Holiness, this Host,
Which, for thy use, himself has deign'd to bless.
MARY. Is then a heav'nly happiness prepar'd
To cheer me on the very verge of death?
As an immortal one on golden clouds
Descends, as once the angel from on high
Deliver'd the Apostle from his fetters: —
He scorns all bars, he scorns the soldier's sword,
He steps undaunted through the bolted portals,
And fills the dungeon with his native glory;
Thus here the messenger of Heav'n appears,
When ev'ry earthly champion had deceiv'd me.
And you, my servant once, are now the servant
Of the Most High, and his immortal Word!
As before *me* your knees were wont to bend,
Before you humbled, now I kiss the dust.
[*She sinks before him on her knees.*
MEL. (*making over her the sign of the cross*) Hear,
Mary Queen of Scotland: — in the name
Of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Hast thou examin'd carefully thy heart,
Swear'st thou, art thou prepar'd in thy confession
To speak the truth before the God of truth?
MARY. Before my God and thee, my heart lies open.
MEL. What calls thee to the presence of the Highest?
MARY. I humbly do acknowledge to have err'd
Most grievously, I tremble to approach,
Sullied with sin, the God of purity.
MEL. Declare the sin which weighs so heavily
Upon thy conscience, since thy last confession.
MARY. My heart was fill'd with thoughts of envious hate,
And vengeance took possession of my bosom.
I hope forgiveness of my sins from God,
Yet could I not forgive my enemy.

MEL. Repent'st thou of the sin? Art thou, in sooth,
Resolv'd to leave this world at peace with all?
MARY. As surely as I wish the joys of heav'n.
MEL. What other sin hath arm'd thy heart against thee?
MARY. Ah! not alone through hate; through lawless love
Have I still more abus'd the sov'reign good.
My heart was vainly turn'd towards the man,
Who left me in misfortune, who deceiv'd me.
MEL. Repent'st thou of the sin? And hast thou turn'd
Thy heart, from this idolatry, to God?
MARY. It was the hardest trial I have pass'd;
This last of earthly bonds is torn asunder.
MEL. What other sin disturbs thy guilty conscience?
MARY. A bloody crime, indeed of ancient date,
And long ago confess'd; yet with new terrors
It now attacks me, black and grisly steps
Across my path, and shuts the gates of heav'n:
By my connivance fell the king, my husband —
I gave my hand and heart to a seducer —
By rigid penance I have made atonement;
Yet in my soul the worm is gnawing still.
MEL. Has then thy heart no other accusation,
Which hath not been confess'd and wash'd away?
MARY. All you have heard, with which my heart is charg'd.
MEL. Think on the presence of Omniscience;
Think on the punishments with which the Church
Threatens imperfect and reserv'd confession!
This is the sin to everlasting death,
For this is the sinning 'gainst his Holy Spirit.
MARY. So may eternal grace with victory
Crown my last contest, as I wittingly
Have nothing hid —

MEL. How? Wilt thou then conceal
The crime from God, for which thou art condemn'd?
Thou tell'st me nothing of the share thou hadst
In Babington and Parry's bloody treason:
Thou diest for this a temporal death; for this
Wilt thou too die the everlasting death?
MARY. I am prepared to meet eternity;
Within the narrow limits of an hour,
I shall appear before my judge's throne;
But, I repeat it, my confession's ended.
MEL. Consider well — the heart is a deceiver.
Thou hast perhaps, with sly equivocation,
The *word* avoided, which would make thee guilty,
Although thy will was party to the crime.
Remember, that no juggler's tricks can blind
The eye of fire which darts through ev'ry breast.
MARY. 'Tis true, that I have call'd upon all princes
To free me from unworthy chains; yet 'tis
As true, that neither by intent or deed
Have I attempted my oppressor's life.
MEL. Your secretaries then have witness'd falsely.
MARY. It is as I have said; — what they have witness'd
The Lord will judge.
MEL. Thou mount'st then, satisfied
Of thy own innocence, the fatal scaffold?
MARY. God suffers me in mercy to atone,
By undeserved death, my youth's transgressions.
MEL. (*making over her the sign of the cross*) Go, then, and expiate them all by death;
Sink a devoted victim on the altar,
Thus shall thy blood atone the blood thou'st spilt.
From female frailty were deriv'd thy faults,
Free from the weakness of mortality,
The spotless spirit seeks the blest abodes.
Now then, by the authority which God
Hath unto me committed, I absolve thee

From all thy sins — be as thy faith thy welfare!
[*He gives her the Host.*
Receive the body which for thee was offer'd —
[*He takes the cup which stands upon the table, consecrates it with silent prayer, then presents it to her; she hesitates to take it, and makes signs to him to withdraw it.*
Receive the blood, which for thy sins was shed —
Receive it — 'tis allow'd thee by the Pope,
To exercise in death the highest office
Of kings, the holy office of the priesthood.
[*She takes the cup.*
And as thou now in this his earthly body
Hast held with God mysterious communion,
So may'st thou henceforth, in his realm of joy,
Where sin no more exists, nor tears of woe,
A fair transfigur'd spirit, join thyself
For ever with the Godhead, and for ever.
[*He sets down the cup; hearing a noise, he covers his head, and goes to the door;* MARY *remains in silent devotion, on her knees.*
MEL. (*returning*) A painful conflict is in store for thee;
Feel'st thou within thee strength enough to smother
Each impulse of malignity and hate?
MARY. I fear not a relapse. I have to God
Devoted both my hatred, and my love.
MEL. Well, then, prepare thee to receive my Lords
Of Leicester and of Burleigh. They are here.

Scene VIII.

Enter Burleigh, Leicester, *and* Paulet.

Leicester *remains in the background, without raising his eyes;* Burleigh, *who remarks his confusion, steps between him and the* Queen.

Bur. I come, my Lady Stuart, to receive
Your last commands and wishes.
Mary. Thanks, my lord.
Bur. It is the pleasure of my royal mistress,
That nothing reasonable be denied you.
Mary. My will, my lord, declares my last desires;
I've plac'd it in the hand of Sir Amias,
And humbly beg that it may be fulfill'd.
Paul. You may rely on this.
Mary. I beg that all
My servants unmolested may return
To France, or Scotland, as their wishes lead.
Bur. It shall be as you wish.
Mary. And since my body
Is not to rest in consecrated ground,
I pray you suffer this my faithful servant
To bear my heart to France, to my relations —
Alas! 'twas ever there.
Bur. It shall be done.
What wishes else?
Mary. Unto her Majesty
Of England bear a sister's salutation;
Tell her, that from the bottom of my heart
I pardon her my death: most humbly too
I crave her to forgive me for the passion
With which I spoke to her. May God preserve her
And bless her with a long and prosp'rous reign!
Bur. Say, do you still adhere to your resolve,
And still refuse assistance from the dean?

MARY. My lord, I've made my peace with God.
[*To* PAULET. Good sir,
I have unwittingly caused you much sorrow, —
Bereft you of your age's only stay.
Oh, let me hope you do not hate my name.
PAUL. (*giving her his hand*) The Lord be with you! go your way in peace.

SCENE IX.

HANNAH KENNEDY, *and the other women of the* QUEEN *crowd into the room, with marks of horror. The* SHERIFF *follows them, a white staff in his hand; behind are seen, through the open doors, men under arms.*

MARY. What ails thee, Hannah? — Yes — my hour is come —
The sheriff comes to lead me to my fate.
And part we must — farewell! —
KEN. *and* CURL. We will not leave thee —
We will not part from thee.
MARY. (*to* MEL.) You, worthy sir,
And my dear faithful Hannah, shall attend me
In my last moments. I am sure my lord
Will not refuse my heart this consolation.
BUR. For this I have no warrant.
MARY. How, my lord;
Can you deny me then this small petition?
Respect my sex; who shall attend me else,
And yield me the last service? — sure it never
Can be my sister's pleasure, that in me
My sex should be insulted; that these men
With their rude hands, should touch my royal person.
BUR. 'Tis order'd that no woman shall ascend
The scaffold steps with you — their tears and moans —

MARY. She shall not weep, my lord, she shall not moan;
I answer for my Hannah's resolution,
Be merciful; divide me not so soon
From my true foster-mother, from my friend.
She bore me on her arms into this life,
Let her then gently lead me to my death.
PAUL. (*to* BURLEIGH) Yield to her wishes.
BUR. Be it so.
MARY. I now
Have nothing in this world to wish for more.
[*She takes the crucifix, and kisses it.*
My God! My comforter! My blest Redeemer!
As once thy arms were stretch'd upon the cross,
Let them be now extended to receive me!
[*She turns around to go, at the same moment her eyes fall upon* LEICESTER, *who, on her going, starts involuntarily and turns his eyes toward her: at this sight* MARY *trembles, her knees fail her, she is about to fall, when* LEICESTER *catches at her, and receives her in his arms; she regards him for some time earnestly, and in silence; he cannot support her looks; at length she speaks.*
You keep your word, my Lord of Leicester: for
You promised me your arm to lead me forth
From prison, and you lend it to me now.
At length the wish'd for day is come, and what
Was oft the object of my fondest dreams
Is now accomplish'd: and the Earl of Leicester,
The long expected, the long wish'd for friend,
Appears at length in Fotheringay Castle.
I see him standing in my prison; all
Is ready for the journey; all the gates
Stand open, and at length I cross the threshold,
Conducted by his hand; and now I leave
These dismal walls behind me, and for ever.

All is fulfill'd, and you have sav'd your honour.

[*He stands as if annihilated; she continues, with a gentle voice.*

Yes, Leicester; not for liberty alone
I wish'd to be indebted to your hands.
You should have made me bless that liberty.
Led by your hand, and happy in your love,
I hop'd once more to taste the joys of life.
Yes; now that I'm prepar'd from all the world
To part, and to become a happy spirit,
Whom earthly inclinations tempt no more,
Now, Leicester, I may venture to confess
Without a blush, the frailty I have conquer'd —
Farewell, my lord; and, if you can, be happy!
To woo two queens has been your daring aim;
You have disdain'd a tender, loving heart;
Betray'd it, in the hope to win a proud one:
Kneel at the feet of Queen Elizabeth!
May your reward not prove your punishment.
Farewell; I now have nothing more on earth.

[*She goes, preceded by the Sheriff, at her side* MELVIL *and her Nurse,* BURLEIGH *and* PAULET *follow, the others, wailing, follow her with their eyes till she disappears; they then retire through the other two doors.*

Scene X.

Leic. (*remaining alone*) Do I live still? Can I
still bear to live?
Will not this roof fall down and bury me?
Yawns no abyss, to swallow in its gulf
The veriest wretch on earth? What have I lost?
Oh, what a pearl have I not cast away!
What bliss celestial madly dash'd aside!
She's gone, a spirit purged from earthly stain,
And the despair of hell remains for me!
Where is the purpose now with which I came,
To stifle my heart's voice in callous scorn?
To see her head descend upon the block
With unaverted and indifferent eyes?
How doth her presence wake my slumb'ring shame?
Must she in death surround me with Love's toils?
Lost, wretched man! No more it suits thee now
To melt away, in womanly compassion:
Love's golden bliss lies not upon thy path,
Then arm thy breast in panoply of steel,
And henceforth be thy brows of adamant!
Wouldst thou not lose the guerdon of thy guilt,
Thou must uphold, complete it daringly!
Pity be dumb; mine eyes be petrified!
I'll see — I will be witness of her fall.

[*He advances with resolute steps toward the door through which* Mary *passed; but stops suddenly half way.*

No! No! The terrors of all Hell possess me.
I cannot look upon the dreadful deed;
I cannot see her die! — Hark! What was that?
They are already there. Beneath my feet
The bloody business is preparing. Hark!
I hear their voices — Hence! — Away — Away —
From this abode of misery and death!

[*He attempts to escape by another door; finds it locked, and returns.*

How! Does some demon chain me to this spot
To hear what I would shudder to behold?
That voice — it is the dean's, exhorting her;
She interrupts him. Hark — she prays aloud —
Her voice is firm — now all is still, quite still!
And sobs and women's moans are all I hear.
Now, they undress her — they remove the stool —
She kneels upon the cushion — lays her head —

[*Having spoken these last words, and paused awhile, he is seen with a convulsive motion suddenly to shrink, and faint away; a confused hum of voices is heard at the same moment from below, and continues for some time.*

Scene XI.

The second Chamber in the Fourth Act.

Eliz. (*entering from a side door; her gait and action expressive of the most violent uneasiness*)
No message yet arrived! What! no one here!
Will evening never come! Stands the sun still
In its ethereal course? I can no more
Remain upon the rack of expectation!
Is it accomplish'd? — Is it not? — I shudder
At both events, and do not dare to ask.
My Lord of Leicester comes not, — Burleigh too,
Whom I appointed to fulfil the sentence.
If they have quitted London, then 'tis done,
The bolt has left its rest — it cuts the air —
It strikes; — has struck already: — were my realm
At stake, I could not now arrest its course.
Who's there?

Scene XII.

Enter a Page.

Eliz. Return'd alone? Where are the lords?
Page. My Lord High Treasurer, and the Earl of Leicester —
Eliz. Where are they?
Page. They are not in London.
Eliz. No!
Where are they then?
Page. That no one could inform me;
Before the dawn, mysteriously, in haste,
They quitted London.
Eliz. *(exultingly)* I am Queen of England!
[*Walking up and down in the greatest agitation.*
Go — call me — no, remain, boy! She is dead —
Now have I room upon the earth at last,
Why do I shake? Whence comes this agueish dread?
My fears are cover'd by the grave; who dares
To say I did it? — I have tears enough
In store to weep her fall. — Are you still here?
[*To the* Page.
Command my secretary Davison
To come to me this instant. Let the Earl
Of Shrewsbury be summon'd. Here he comes.
[*Exit* Page.

Scene XIII.

Enter Shrewsbury.

Eliz. Welcome, my noble lord. What tidings — say —
It cannot be a trifle which hath led
Your footsteps hither at so late an hour.

SHREW. My liege, the doubts that hung upon your heart,
And dutiful concern for your fair fame,
Directed me this morning to the Tower,
Where Mary's secretaries, Nau and Curl,
Are now confined as pris'ners, for I wish'd
Once more to put their evidence to proof.
On my arrival the lieutenant seem'd
Embarras'd and perplex'd; refus'd to show me
His pris'ners; but my threats obtain'd admittance.
God! what a sight was there! With frantic looks,
With hair dishevell'd, on his pallet lay
The Scot, like one tormented by a fury.
The miserable man no sooner saw me,
Than at my feet he fell, and there, with screams,
Clasping my knees, and writhing like a worm,
Implored, conjured me to acquaint him with
His sov'reign's destiny, for vague reports
Had somehow reach'd the dungeons of the Tow'r,
That she had been condemn'd to suffer death.
When I confirm'd these tidings, adding too,
That on his evidence she had been doom'd, —
He started wildly up, — caught by the throat
His fellow pris'ner; with the giant strength
Of madness tore him to the ground, and tried
To strangle him. No sooner had we sav'd
The wretch from his fierce grapple, than at once
He turn'd his rage against himself, and beat
His breasts with savage fists; then curs'd himself
And his companions to the depths of hell!
His evidence was false; the fatal letters
To Babington, which he had sworn were true,
He now denounc'd as forgeries — for he
Had set down words the queen had never spoken.
The traitor Nau had led him to this treason.
Then ran he to the casement, threw it wide
With frantic force, and cried into the street,

So loud that all the people gather'd round,
I am the man, Queen Mary's secretary,
The traitor, who accus'd his mistress falsely;
I bore false witness, and am cursed for ever!
ELIZ. You said yourself, that he had lost his wits;
A madman's words prove nothing.
SHREW. Yet this madness
Serves in itself to swell the proof. My liege,
Let me conjure thee; be not over hasty;
Prithee, give order for a new inquiry!
ELIZ. I will, my lord, because it is your wish,
Not that I can believe my noble peers
Have in this case pronounced a hasty judgment.
To set your mind at rest, the inquiry shall
Be straight renew'd. Well, that 'tis not too late!—
Upon the honour of our royal name
No, not the shadow of a doubt shall rest.

SCENE XIV.

Enter DAVISON.

ELIZ. The sentence, sir, which I but late entrusted
Unto your keeping; — where is it?
DAV. (*in the utmost astonishment*) The sentence!
ELIZ. (*more urgent*) Which yesterday I gave into your charge.
DAV. Into my charge, my liege!
ELIZ. The people urged
And baited me to sign it. I perforce
Was driven to yield obedience to their will.
I did so; did so, on extreme constraint,
And in your hands deposited the paper.
To gain time was my purpose; you remember,
What then I told you. Now, the paper, sir!

SHREW. Restore it, sir, affairs have changed since then,
The inquiry must be set on foot anew.
DAV. Anew! Eternal mercy!
ELIZ. Why this pause,
This hesitation? Where, sir, is the paper?
DAV. I am undone! Undone! My fate is sealed.
ELIZ. (*interrupting him violently*) Let me not fancy, sir —
DAV. O, I am lost!
I have it not.
ELIZ. How? What?
SHREW. O, God in heav'n!
DAV. It is in Burleigh's hands — since yesterday.
ELIZ. Wretch! Is it thus you have obeyed my orders?
Did I not lay my strict injunction on you
To keep it carefully?
DAV. No such injunction
Was laid on me, my liege.
ELIZ. Give me the lie?
Opprobrious wretch! When did I order you
To give the paper into Burleigh's hands?
DAV. Never expressly in so many words. —
ELIZ. And, paltering villain! dare you then presume
To construe, as you list, my words — and lay
Your bloody meaning on them? Woe betide you,
If evil come of this officious deed!
Your life shall answer the event to me.
Earl Shrewsbury, you see how my good name
Has been abused!
SHREW. I see! O, God in heav'n!
ELIZ. What say you?
SHREW. If the knight has dar'd to act
In this, upon his own authority,
Without the knowledge of your Majesty,
He must be cited to the court of peers

To answer there for subjecting thy name
To the abhorrence of all after time.

Scene XV.

Enter Burleigh.

Bur. (*bowing his knee before the* Queen) Long life
and glory to my royal mistress,
And may all enemies of her dominions
End like this Stuart.
[Shrewsbury *hides his face.* — Davison *wrings his hands in despair.*
Eliz. Speak, my lord; did you
From me receive the warrant?
Bur. No, my queen,
From Davison.
Eliz. And did he in my name
Deliver it?
Bur. No, that I cannot say.
Eliz. And dar'd you then to execute the writ
Thus hastily, nor wait to know my pleasure?
Just was the sentence — we are free from blame
Before the world; yet it behoved thee not
To intercept our natural clemency.
For this, my lord, I banish you my presence;
And as this forward will was *yours* alone,
Bear *you* alone the curse of the misdeed! [*To* Dav.
For you, sir, who have trait'rously o'erstepp'd
The bounds of your commission, and betray'd
A sacred pledge entrusted to your care,
A more severe tribunal is prepar'd:
Let him be straight conducted to the Tow'r,
And capital arraignments fil'd against him.
My honest Talbot, you alone have prov'd,

'Mongst all my counsellors, an upright man:
You shall henceforward be my guide — my friend.
SHREW. O! banish not the truest of your friends;
Nor cast those into prison, who for you
Have acted; who for you are silent now.
But suffer me, great queen, to give the seal,
Which, these twelve years, I've borne unworthily,
Back to your royal hands, and take my leave.
ELIZ. (*surprised*) No, Shrewsbury; you surely would not now
Desert me? No; not now.
SHREW. Pardon, I am
Too old, and this right hand is grown too stiff
To set the seal upon your later deeds.
ELIZ. Will he forsake me, who has sav'd my life?
SHREW. 'Tis little I have done; — I could not save
Your nobler part. Live — govern happily!
Your rival's dead. Henceforth you've nothing more
To fear, — henceforth, to nothing pay regard. [*Exit.*
ELIZ. (*to the* EARL *of* KENT, *who enters*) Send for the Earl of Leicester.
KENT. He desires
To be excused — he is embark'd for France.
[*The curtain drops.*

THE END.

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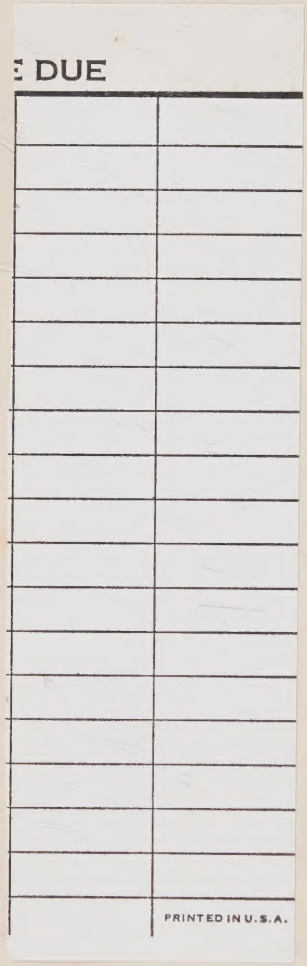

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